

DN disabilitynow

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CIL funding crisis

EXCLUSIVE BY ELIZABETH CHOPPIN

A funding crisis is threatening services run by disabled people across the UK, *DN* research has confirmed.

Half of the Centres for Independent Living (CIL) which responded to *DN*'s random survey reported that all or part of their funding was under threat or has been in the last year.

Of 12 respondents, eight said their work was undervalued and six reported their services were under threat.

Wendy Dundas, of West of England CIL, said: "Fundors undervalue the fact that our organisation is managed and controlled by disabled people and that disabled people know the issues best."

Meanwhile, Disability West Midlands announced in late March it was closing due to a loss of core funding, and Birmingham Coalition of Disabled People is likely to close this month unless

it raises £100,000.

In the wake of recent cuts and closures of CILs and user-led organisations (*DN* March, page 10), campaigners are concerned that the government risks not delivering on policies laid out in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit report, *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* (ILC), which called for an organisation run by disabled people in each local authority.

David Gibbs, of Derbyshire CIL, warned there was "no joining up at all" between central government policy and "what happens on the ground".

The issue was raised at London's Disability Capital conference in March, where disability consultant Jenny Morris said "lots of disability organisations are rather pissed off".

And Maria Brenton, the director of Hammersmith and Fulham Action on Disability, said: "I chair an organisation that limps from year to year

with uncertain funding, which we try to patch up with charitable funding."

David Morris, joint chair of the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL), said *DN*'s survey results were "extremely worrying" but did not surprise him. He said NCIL was conducting its own survey, to be published this summer.

A Department of Health (DH) spokesman said the government was "considering" how to take forward the ILC recommendation.

He said the Association of Directors of Social Services and NCIL were working together to help user-led organisations bid on an equal footing for local authority contracts.

The DH gave £9million from 2003 to 2006 to voluntary organisations and local councils through the Direct Payments Development Fund. An independent report on how this money was spent will be published later this year.



ANTHEA BEVAN

Open for business: Model Erin O'Connor celebrates with Shane Monaghan, nine, at the opening of Whizz Kidz's new mobility centre in Birmingham, last month. The centre, supported by The Vodafone Foundation, will provide advice, assessments and equipment trials for disabled children and young people. The charity's first centre opened in Newcastle in 2003.



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GLAD on verge of collapse

EXCLUSIVE BY PRIYA KOTECHA

London's leading organisation of disabled people appears to be on the verge of collapse, after all its staff were made redundant, *DN* has learned.

The redundancies came after the Association of London Government (ALG) confirmed it had withdrawn Greater London Action on Disability's (GLAD) core funding.

GLAD had six months from last September to show "significant improvements" in how it was spending its grant, reportedly worth £300,000 a year.

An ALG spokesman said: "As a result of checks carried out on GLAD, there were concerns on the level of services GLAD were providing. In March, significant improvements hadn't been forthcoming so the grant, which is funded by

taxpayers, was withdrawn."

GLAD was given until 7 April to appeal ALG's decision, but failed to do so. The money has now been ring-fenced for other disability services in the capital.

Disability campaigners said they were "saddened but not surprised" at GLAD's demise.

David Morris, disability policy and project manager at the Greater London Authority (GLA), said: "I think that it's something that's been expected for a long time. Disabled people in London have been very let down with the shenanigans that have gone on at GLAD."

Kamran Mallick, director of Hammersmith and Fulham Action on Disability (HAFAD), said: "HAFAD has had little or no contact with GLAD over the last two years and has felt let down by what was once a great organisation which

benefited its members."

In a further blow, it was confirmed last month that GLAD had lost its second employment tribunal of the year. Former office administrator Michelle Scotland successfully sued for sexual discrimination.

Ms Scotland, who was sacked in June 2005 after becoming pregnant, said she was "absolutely over the moon" with her victory. The tribunal is believed to have ordered GLAD to pay her £30,000 compensation.

Trish Pashley, chief executive of GLAD, confirmed that all staff had been made redundant, including herself. She would not say how many had lost their jobs. GLAD's chair, Maryam Zanzouzi, failed to respond to repeated attempts by *DN* to discuss the situation.

* See page 12

On the cover: Campaigner Toby Hewson joined a Scope protest in Westminster last month, to demand the government continues funding of communication aids and equipment. See page 21 for comments.

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Speed skier: Former soldier Kevin Alderton has set a new, unofficial, blind world speed ski-ing record, reaching 100.94 mph over a course at Les Arcs, France. Mr Alderton, from Dartford, Kent, was guided via radio speakers in his helmet. He has been supported by St Dunstons, which assists blind ex-service personnel.

Victim's triple abuse

DN CAMPAIGN

EXCLUSIVE BY JOHN PRING

A man with learning difficulties has allegedly been abused at two care homes, a decade after he was a victim of the regime of abuse that led to DN's Justice for Survivors campaign.

David* was one of many adults assaulted and neglected at the Longcare homes in Buckinghamshire** in the 1980s and early 1990s.

But soon after he moved to Home A in east London in October 2003, his brother Peter* noticed a series of injuries,

including a fractured ankle and a serious injury to his eye.

In June 2004, David was moved to Home B in east London. Several weeks ago, he sustained another eye injury.

Peter has now learned that the Metropolitan police are investigating Home B and nine members of staff have been suspended, after allegations of abuse from another resident.

The head of the local learning disability partnership board said it was following adult protection guidelines at both homes.

Peter told DN: "I am at the stage where I can't think what to do anymore. It's just overwhelming. I have got no hope

of finding him a decent home."

Richard Curen, director of Respond, which provided therapy to some Longcare victims, said: "It is appalling that allegedly this man has had to experience yet more abuse in a place where he should feel safe."

A member of staff at Home A admitted there was an investigation, but could not comment.

A spokesman for Home B said they were co-operating with the police investigation but the suspensions were "standard practice". He said they had not received a complaint about David's injury.

*Names changed

**Visit www.silentvictims.co.uk

Gulf War syndrome remains a mystery

The UK's leading service veterans charity has asked the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to research ways to improve the health of Gulf War veterans.

The call follows a major review of research, funded by the Ministry of Defence, which found no single cause of Gulf War illnesses.

Professor Simon Wessely, who edited the review for the Royal Society – a scientific academy – concluded a range of factors were responsible for

illnesses experienced by veterans of the 1990-91 Gulf War, one of which was their vaccination programme.

But he told DN: "It seems to me that after 15 years we are not likely to find very much more about the direct causes of Gulf War Illness."

Lisa Wise, head of public policy for the Royal British Legion, said it was disappointing the review could not explain why so many veterans became ill.

But she welcomed the rec-

ommendation that work should begin on treating veterans. "They have been waiting about 16 years and there has been no explanation given as to the cause of illness and very little work been done on how to treat them."

Veterans minister Don Touhig said: "I believe Professor Wessely is absolutely correct when he says we should now look to the future and focus our resources on rehabilitating Gulf War Veterans who are ill."

Mother in school transport row

The mother of a disabled boy has said she would rather go to prison than send her son to school with the transport firm provided by her council.

Sally Wynn, from Gloucestershire, said an education welfare officer warned she could be prosecuted for withholding her son Ben, eight, from his special school since January.

Ms Wynn said she first refused to use Guttridge Transport in 2002 after finding blood on his wheelchair headrest. Drivers were late and could not operate Ben's equipment.

Ms Wynn drove Ben to school until last December, when she could no longer afford the fuel.

She said: "I'm well aware there is a chance I could be sent to prison over this and I'm prepared to go that far. Because he doesn't have a voice, I cannot allow him to go with people I don't trust."

A Guttridge spokesman denied she had complained, disputed her criticisms and said their record "speaks for itself".

But he added: "Any parent or pupil we bring to school has a right to question the quality of service we provide."

A Gloucestershire County Council spokeswoman said it had offered alternative arrangements, which Ms Wynn has denied.

Surprise resignation at Mobilise

Mystery surrounds the sudden resignation of the chief executive of the UK's largest disabled drivers' organisation, only seven months after she was appointed.

Pamela Morrissey took the helm at Mobilise after it was formed by last year's merger of the Disability Drivers' Association and the Disabled Drivers' Motor Club.

Ms Morrissey told DN that she did not have another job and that leaving Mobilise was a "personal decision".

She said: "I've got other irons in the fire. Things have changed for me personally."

A spokeswoman for Mobilise said a statement addressing the future of the organisation and Ms Morrissey's resignation would be released after the annual meeting, which was due to be held after DN went to press.

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Decision eases Sativex access

DN CAMPAIGN

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

Campaigners have welcomed the government's decision to issue an "open general licence" for importing the cannabis-based spray Sativex.

The Home Office (HO) decision to simplify the licensing process means doctors and pharmacists only have to obtain a single import licence to supply or stock the medicine for all their patients, instead of applying for one licence per patient.

An HO spokeswoman said:

"We have facilitated the arrangements for doctors, pharmacists and patients to possess the drug without the requirement to be individually licensed."

An MS Society spokesman said the decision would help reduce paperwork for doctors.

He said: "Anything which helps to simplify the process is to be welcomed, but obviously we want to see people having equal access to the medication, whatever that may be."

GWP welcomed the announcement and said the new process reduced "bureaucracy".

The Department of Health said the announcement would

not affect patients, and NHS prescriptions still had to be approved by their health authority.

And there are still widespread concerns about the availability of the drug (DN April, page 16).

The HO announced in November 2005 that Sativex could be imported on a named patient basis for people with multiple sclerosis.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency has said it will consider applications to import the drug for people with other conditions.



Environmental impact: Disabled schoolchildren (above) who helped improve access to the Eden Project have won an award for innovation from charity Community Service Volunteers (CSV). The students, aged between eight and 13, from Cornwall, suggested adjusting the height of garden features and introducing more stimulants for people with sensory impairments, as part of CSV Make a Difference Day.

Gym 'allows mothers to park in disabled bays'

DN CAMPAIGN



A chain of gyms has been criticised for allegedly allowing non-disabled mums to abuse disabled parking bays at one of its sites.

The Virgin Active chain has angered Davina Williams (pictured), a member of the Northampton branch for almost four years.

Mrs Williams claims a staff member told her in March that the club allowed mothers and babies to park in its eight disabled bays.

She said: "There are over 40 disabled members...it is impossible for us to go to the gym at the weekend or in the evenings as the spaces are full and some-



times it is too far to get to the gym with a wheelchair."

A Virgin Active spokeswoman denied there was a lenient mother and baby policy.

She said the car park was patrolled and tannoy announcements were used to ask people to move their cars from disabled

bays, but the situation would now be monitored more closely.

Mrs Williams said she had never heard any such tannoy announcements.

Will Bee, a DRC director, said: "Owners of premises do not fulfil their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act simply by painting a wheelchair symbol and designating a parking space for disabled drivers and passengers. They must take steps to ensure that spaces are not abused by other motorists."

"It seems particularly ironic that the users of a health club are too lazy to walk the few extra metres necessary to avoid parking in spaces reserved for disabled members of the club."

Loophole to be closed

Government plans to close a notorious loophole in mental health law have been welcomed by campaigners.

In March, the Department of Health announced plans to introduce safeguards into the Mental Capacity Act – passed in 2005 – to protect people who lack the capacity to give consent for treatment.

The issue, known as the "Bournewood Gap", refers to a case in which HL, who cannot be named, was "informally" detained in Bournewood Hospital in Surrey for several months. He could not appeal

against his detention until being "sectioned" under the Mental Health Act. The European Court of Human Rights found in 2004 that HL's human rights had been breached.

HL's carer said the family was pleased the issue was "finally being recognised".

Richard Kramer, chair of the Making Decisions Alliance (MDA), said: "The MDA has long campaigned for Bournewood to be addressed in the Mental Capacity Act, and we're pleased the government has finally signalled their commitment to do this."



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Call for blanket ban on abusers

Charities are calling for the government's new child and adult protection bill to ban most abusers from working with all vulnerable people.

At present, the safeguarding vulnerable groups bill plans to set up one list of people barred from working with children and another of those barred from working with vulnerable adults.

But the Ann Craft Trust (ACT), Respond and Voice UK are pushing for an amendment to the bill, currently in its committee stage in the Lords.

Deborah Kitson, director of ACT, said: "We feel that if there are to be separate lists...that the presumption should be that they appear on both lists, unless there is a good reason why this shouldn't happen. I believe that abuse is about power, not age."

Tiger says sorry

The world's number one golfer, Tiger Woods, has apologised for using the term "spaz" to describe his disappointing putting in one of the season's biggest tournaments, after being approached by DN.

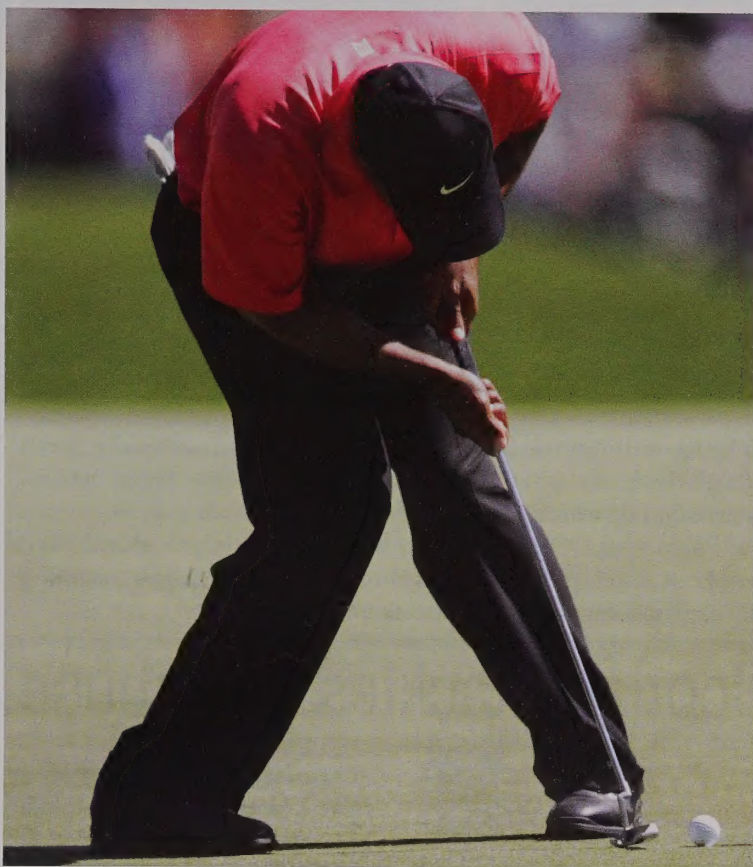
Mr Woods, 30, made the comments in interviews following his failure to defend his US Masters title in Augusta, Georgia, one of the season's four big Majors.

A spokeswoman for the British Paralympic Association said: "It was an unfortunate choice of words, but it was probably used in the heat of the moment."

A spokesman for disability charity Scope said: "Although in the US the term 'spaz' may not be as offensive as it is in the UK, many disabled people here will have taken exception to likening his poor golf stroke to that of a 'spaz'."

He added: "All Scope asks is that people – particularly in the public sphere – watch what they say, especially as their remarks are read and heard worldwide."

A spokesman for Mr Woods



Putting his foot in it: Tiger Woods in a stance that also caused controversy during the US Masters

said: "Tiger meant nothing derogatory to any person or persons and apologises for any offence caused."

A spokeswoman in London said his decision to apologise was partly due to being approached by DN.

Green paper's shock secret

BY JOHN PRING

Shocked campaigners have attacked government plans to give younger disabled people lower benefits than those aged 25 and over.

The welfare reform green paper, published in January, detailed plans to introduce a new employment support allowance (ESA), to replace incapacity benefit.

But the green paper failed to make it explicitly clear that ESA (which would only apply to new claimants) would be paid at a lower rate for people under 25, and an even lower rate for under 18s.

Lorna Reith, chief executive of Disability Alliance (DA), said she and other campaigners were shocked when civil servants revealed the plans at a meeting in March, two months after the

green paper was published.

She said: "It was one of those jaw-dropping moments. We challenged them on it and their response was the new benefit is supposed to mirror job seekers allowance (JSA) and JSA has a lower rate for people under 25, on the basis that they are all living at home with their parents."

But Ms Reith said younger disabled people are more disadvantaged than older people if they have to stop work.

A Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) spokeswoman accepted the green paper did not state explicitly that there would be lower rates for younger people, although it did say levels of the new benefit would be based on JSA.

But she said the DWP would take account of views in the public consultation, which ended last month.

Scots slam reforms

The government's incapacity benefit reforms could force disabled people further into poverty, campaigners have warned.

A letter to every Scottish MP from the Scottish Campaign for Welfare Reform says January's green paper risks becoming "a missed opportunity to radically improve the benefits system

and the lives of thousands".

The letter warns that using sanctions to push disabled people into work could force them into inappropriate jobs. It also criticises the paper's failure to address inadequate benefit levels and says the government has not provided enough resources to fund its plans.

Website improves access to contracts

Businesses and factories where more than 50 per cent of employees are disabled may find it easier to win contracts, after the launch of an online directory.

The website* will provide details of products and services offered by supported businesses, where more than half the staff are disabled.

The project, sponsored by Jobcentre Plus, includes the Department for Work and Pensions, Remploy and the GMB union, and aims to make it easier for central and local government to link up with supported firms.

The launch in late March came only weeks after the European Union (EU) passed its new Public Sector Procurement Directive, which allows authorities in the EU to reserve contracts for supported businesses.

Remploy's chief executive, Bob Warner, said: "Disabled people play a significant role in the UK economy and this project is a step towards ensuring that public sector bodies not only have access to supported factories and businesses but also have the impetus and freedom to reserve and place contracts with these factories and businesses."

*www.supportedbusiness.org.uk

Report tells providers to listen

Public bodies largely neglect the input of disabled service users but have made some positive changes for disabled people, according to new research.

A report*, published last month by the Department for Work and Pensions, examined how the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) had been incorporated by health and education bodies, government and emergency services.

Findings show that the "vast majority" of the 376 respondents had adapted their work environments, implemented flexible working hours and changed

policies and practices according to the DDA. But the report said that organisations must consider the "needs and experiences" of disabled service users to ensure services are appropriate.

A spokeswoman for the Disability Rights Commission said: "The public sector has yet to grasp the concept of involving disabled people and without this involvement we will be concerned that their actions will be less effective."

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Review reveals areas of inequality

BY PRIYA KOTECHEA

Only four per cent of children with statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) achieve five or more A*-C grades at GCSE, compared with half the pupils without SEN, according to a new report.

The interim report*, published in March, highlights areas of inequality in Britain and was based on evidence collected by the *Equalities Review*.

The review, chaired by Trevor Phillips, chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, was launched in February last year to investigate the causes of persistent discrimination and inequality in British society.

His report also found that disabled 16-year-olds were twice as likely to be out of work, education or training as their non-disabled peers, and

half of long-term disabled people had jobs in autumn 2005, compared with 80 per cent of non-disabled people.

The report, which is now out for consultation, highlights the job prospects of disabled people as one of a number of "persistent and disturbing challenges for the task of reducing inequality and increasing fairness".

Mr Phillips said the review has pinpointed areas where attention needs to be focused to allow disadvantaged people to "reach their full potential and contribute to a vibrant and successful UK economy".

The review panel will make policy recommendations when it publishes its findings.

* To obtain a copy of *The Equalities Review: Interim Report for Consultation*, tel: 020 7276 1200 or visit www.theequalitiesreview.org.uk

Site's instant answer

Disabled people can now receive an "instant decision" about whether they are eligible for social services support, thanks to a new online tool.

Kent County Council (KCC) launched the website, which could be used by more than 9,000 people every year, as an extra way of assessing support needs.

The website is targeted at people with moderate needs and tells them about help and

equipment they qualify for.

Oliver Mills, strategic director of social services for KCC, said: "It will not replace contact on the phone or face-to-face but, as an extra channel of communication, it is a real breakthrough."

People with more complex needs are referred for a full assessment, although a KCC spokeswoman said that, if funding permits, the system will be developed to include them later this year.



Helping millions: A healthcare worker examines Fazar, from Bangladesh, as part of the work of charity Sight Savers International, which has treated its 100 millionth person since it was founded in 1950. Sight Savers helps visually impaired and blind people in developing countries through basic healthcare training and carrying out operations and examinations.

Scotland tackles bay abuse

DN CAMPAIGN



Campaigners fighting the abuse of disabled parking bays have welcomed the Scottish government's decision to commission in-depth research on the issue.

The research, which is being carried out by Transport and Travel Research Ltd, is looking closely at the problem of non-disabled motorists parking in disabled bays in Scotland.

The report will list best practice guidelines and make recommendations on how organisations that provide off-street parking can address the issue.

A Scottish Executive spokeswoman said the report was

commissioned because the issue of parking bay abuse had been debated in the Scottish parliament and was a prominent issue for many MSPs in their constituencies.

She added that it was too soon to speculate on what would be done with the research findings.

Mary Grace, chairman of The Blue Badge Network, said she was confident that the Scottish Executive would act on the results.

She said: "[Bay abuse] is a never-ending problem and of course the people who get hurt the most are the disabled people. Everyone else washes their hands of it."

In brief

Charity boss shamed

A director of Cornwall's Eden Project resigned, after saying disabled people should be kept "behind the scenes" to protect the image of professional horticulture.

Sue Minter, Eden's director of horticulture, had made the comments at a seminar in London in March.

A spokesman for the Eden Project, the world's biggest plant conservatories, said it was "certainly not the case" that disabled staff were kept out of public sight.

Lab-grown organs work

Scientists reported "long-term success" with the first human recipients of organs grown in a laboratory.

Anthony Atala, director of the Institute for Regenerative Medicine in North Carolina, USA, said in *The Lancet* that, since 1999, seven children had received bladders grown from their own cells.

He said their work showed regenerative medicine could one day help solve the shortage of donor organs for transplants.

He is now working to grow 20 different tissues and organs in the laboratory.

Beckham: "I have OCD"

England football captain David Beckham reportedly said in an interview that he has obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

He said he had tried and failed to break his repetitive behaviour. The interview will be screened in the lead-up to this summer's World Cup.

The charity OCD-UK says people with the condition experience recurring and unwanted thoughts about certain situations, which they try to fight with mental or physical rituals.

Breast cancer drug victory

A woman with breast cancer won a Court of Appeal ruling that Swindon Primary Care Trust acted irrationally and unlawfully in refusing to fund her treatment with the unlicensed drug Herceptin.

The trust said it would now review its policy. The charity Breast Cancer Care said it was "appalling that a patient felt compelled to take such extreme and exhausting action to access a drug recommended by her doctor".

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence is set to rule in July on whether trusts should fund the drug.

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Campaigners still concerned over new mental health laws

BY PRIYA KOTECHEA

Disability campaigners have hit out at the government's proposal to amend mental health laws, following its decision to scrap its controversial mental health bill.

Activists celebrated in March after the government dropped the bill because it was lengthy, complex and too costly to implement.

The draft bill had raised serious concerns about the use of compulsory treatment for people with mental health problems and forced detention for people with untreatable personality disorders who had not committed a crime.

But campaigners now fear new streamlined proposals

could be just as draconian.

The outlined plans include "supervised" treatment in the community for mental health patients who have been detained and treated in hospital.

Mental health charity Mind said it wanted assurances that compulsory treatment would only be given if there was a therapeutic benefit for the patient.

The British Council of Disabled People said it was "very concerned" the new bill would be "rushed through without real and meaningful consultation."

So far the new proposals do not include plans, originally in the draft bill, that would have further protected vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect. If included, these changes could meet some of the aims of DN's

Justice for Survivors campaign.

The Department of Health said proposals would not be finalised until the bill was launched before the summer recess next month.

Proposals for a new independent advocacy support service have also been ditched.

However, plans to introduce a simplified definition of a mental disorder and the decision to exclude people with learning difficulties from mental health legislation have been welcomed.

A Department of Health spokeswoman said: "We know people are concerned, but we think we have struck the right balance between patient safeguards and ensuring public safety."



Dog on duty: Assistance dog Orca and partner Cheryl Smith, from York, nuzzle up after he nabbed a PDSA* gold medal for outstanding devotion to duty. Orca, trained by Canine Partners, saved Cheryl's life by running for help when she fell from her wheelchair into a water-filled ditch in 2003. The award is the highest honour a civilian animal can receive for bravery and devotion to duty. *www.pdsa.org.uk

Pensions changed without permission

A government pilot project that switched pension payments from post office accounts to bank accounts without asking the recipients for permission was "completely out of order", according to a disabled man.

Thomas Hodson, a wheelchair user from London, received a letter from the Pension Service saying his next pension payment would automatically be switched into his NatWest bank account.

Mr Hodson said he preferred to have pension money paid into his post office card account as the post office

was closer to his home.

The new arrangement was reversed after he called to complain.

Mr Hodson said: "At least they have sorted my case out, so it must pay for us all to make a fuss about such matters."

A Department for Work and Pensions spokeswoman said the pilot was intended to "ease the transition" from post office card accounts, which are due to be closed down in 2010.

She said each payment into a post office account costs taxpayers £1 whereas payments into bank accounts cost 1p.

Emergency plans set to improve

Disabled people must be actively involved in the design of emergency planning for the underground tube network, according to experts and campaigners who met to discuss the issue.

This was one of several proposals to improve the way authorities deal with disabled people during an emergency, following complaints from people who were caught up in the London bombings on 7 July, 2005.

The plans were discussed at a seminar on London emergency planning in March, where 15 core agencies involved in emergency planning signed up to the social model of disability.

They also discussed the need for information to be displayed in both audio and visual formats, especially during emergencies.

Kirsten Hearn, chair of the Metropolitan police's equal opportunities and diversity board, said the meeting had been very productive and plans were underway to help all the different agencies understand the needs of disabled people during emergencies.

She said: "It's massively important that these agencies have signed up to the social model, because if they understand all the issues, what they'll do is help to remove the barriers and not the people."

A report from the seminar will be presented to the board's next meeting.

Got a motoring problem?

Watch out for DN's annual motoring supplement in our June issue. The 24-page supplement will be packed with reviews of the latest models and features on the latest motoring issues as well as guides and giveaways to meet all your travel needs.

DN is also looking for any motoring questions you may have, whether on adaptations, finance, learning to drive or parking.

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Send your questions and suggestions to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk or write to the usual address.

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Setting the standard for deaf people's services

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

Deaf and hard of hearing people should get better service from communication support agencies, thanks to a new set of standards*.

Although the scheme is currently voluntary, the RNID is urging agencies to sign up.

Many of the agencies, which provide support such as sign

language interpreters and lipspeakers, have been involved in the agency steering group (ASG) that drew up the standards.

RNID's deputy director of communication, training and development, Marilyn Osborne, said: "By signing up to the standards outlined by the ASG, an agency can demonstrate its

commitment to providing a high quality service and good customer care."

The standards, which were launched last month, include a requirement to put all frontline staff through Criminal Records Bureau checks and ensure they have the correct qualifications.

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Strict rules on passports

Families with disabled children have been advised to apply early for passports because of strict new photograph guidelines.

The rules were introduced by the UK Passport Service (UKPS) to meet new international standards.

But the charity Contact a Family (CAF) said some parents were finding it difficult to secure approval of passport photos for their disabled children.

Passport pictures must now show the full face, with eyes looking forward and mouth closed, together with other requirements that can be impossible for some disabled children and adults.

The Home Office said exceptions were allowed for disabled people but increased the risk of being turned back by other countries' passport control.

Consultations are continuing with disability groups, including CAF.

*Passport Adviceline, tel: 0870 521 0410 or visit www.passport.gov.uk

Councils better on web access

Websites run by local authorities are generally more accessible to disabled people than those run by private companies, a new report has found.

Figures released by SiteMorse, which tests and monitors websites, showed 45 per cent of local authority sites surveyed passed basic accessibility tests, compared with 23 per cent of FTSE 100 firms.

The survey also found that "neither sector scored particularly well" on more in-depth testing, with only 23 of 460 local authority sites and one out of 98 private sector sites passing.

SiteMorse chairman Nicholas Le Seeleur said: "The results of our comparison overturn the generally accepted notion that IT quality in the private sector is far superior to that in the public arena."

This year's budget failed again to extend winter fuel payments to severely disabled people but delivered free bus travel, a boost for sports and money to improve access to the arts. John Pring and Priya Kotecha report

Brown fails again on winter fuel payments

Campaigners have attacked the lack of measures to lift disabled people out of poverty in this year's budget.

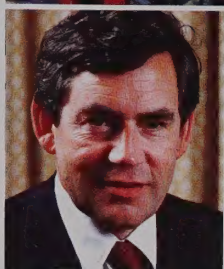
Chancellor Gordon Brown's speech included one small-scale measure, to extend free bus travel for disabled and older people.

But there was no extension of the tax-free £200 winter fuel payment paid to older people – confirmed in the speech – to severely disabled people under 60.

The British Council of Disabled People (BCODP) said it was "alarmed" and "very disappointed at the lack of consideration for disabled people in Gordon Brown's spring budget".

Jared O'Mara, a BCODP spokesman, said: "Disabled people are, as a social group, one of the most poverty stricken in Britain. Gordon Brown and the government should be doing more to alleviate that poverty and helping us become fully elevated into British society."

"We would hope that in future budgets disabled people will be at the forefront of the agenda."



Not the ticket: Gordon Brown failed to act on winter fuel but will extend free bus travel for disabled and older people

He said Mr Brown could have announced funding to allow disabled people to claim legal aid to take cases under the Disability Discrimination Act, particularly against organisations that still refuse to make their buildings accessible. He also criticised the failure to extend winter fuel payments.

Disability Alliance (DA), which campaigns on benefits and poverty issues for disabled people, was also "disappointed" with the budget.

Lorna Reith, chief executive of DA, said: "It was a missed opportunity to do

all kinds of things."

She said she was "bitterly disappointed" at the chancellor's failure to act on winter fuel payments, a measure she said had "considerable support" within parliament (DN, April).

But she welcomed the decision to extend free bus travel for disabled people.

A scheme to provide free, off-peak, local bus travel for disabled and older people was already due to start on 1 April. But the chancellor announced that, in two years' time, the scheme would be extended to cover all off-peak bus travel.

£300 million for athletes

Disabled athletes welcomed Gordon Brown's announcement of a further £300million to be invested in training and sporting opportunities for disabled and non-disabled athletes in the run-up to the London 2012 Paralympics and Olympics.

This will be added to the £300 million National Lottery funding already secured.

The chancellor also announced a new national sports foundation, which will bring together public and private funding for local sports facilities and grassroots participation.

The British Paralympic



Association (BPA) welcomed the extra funding and said it would provide Britain with "the building blocks" to ensure continued Paralympic success.

Phil Lane, BPA chief executive, said: "We can now aim to take the largest and most competitive squad to the 2012 Paralympic Games."

Arts access boost

The Treasury has announced funding for a scheme to improve access to the theatre for people with sight and hearing impairments.

The award of £725,000 – with further cash to come from the Arts Council – was made to the national disability charities VocalEyes and STAGETEXT.

Their project will expand high quality provision of audio description and captioning over the next three years by grouping English theatres together to enable them to provide the services more efficiently.

Other disability-related projects awarded funds under the Treasury's Invest to Save – Inclusive Communities Budget included: £240,000 for a scheme looking at the links between mental health, incapacity benefit and areas of deprivation; £875,000 for a project using arts to improve health for overweight children, adults with mental health problems and people who have had strokes; and £210,000 to develop an arts on prescription scheme for people with stress and depression, as an alternative to a tranquilliser.

Children's services under the microscope

The Chancellor has announced a review of policies affecting children and young people – including disabled children – although it was not mentioned in his budget speech.

The review by the Treasury and the Department for Education and Skills will include an examination of how services can improve support to families with disabled children. Its conclusions will feed into next year's comprehensive spending review (CSR) for 2008-2012.

It follows the introduction of a ten-minute rule bill in the Commons by Labour MP Ed Balls (pictured), himself the former chief economic advisor to the Treasury and Mr Brown's right-hand man (DN, March).

Mr Balls' bill called for a Public Service Agreement to be included in the CSR, which would force councils to provide certain services for disabled children and their families.

The bill was backed by the Disabled Children's Group coalition – Mencap, Contact a



Family, the Council for Disabled Children and the Special Education Consortium – which welcomed the chancellor's announcement.

A spokesman for the group said: "It is excellent news that the chancellor has recognised disabled children and their families are still getting a raw deal."

"Disabled children have for too long fallen through the cracks in children's services and now we have a real chance to address this."

"We will press for the review to get disabled children's families the care and support they so badly need."

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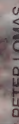
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Lord Adonis said that fulfilling statutory responsibilities should be kept in the hands of local

Lord Adonis admitted that he would like to see “lesser variations” and he said the Department for Education and Skills would carefully consider committee recommendations.

Patients fend for themselves

Peter Cardy, MCS's chief executive, said the report "exposes



A Department of Health spokeswoman said it was "committed to improving cancer care for all patients".

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Extent of poverty revealed

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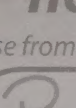
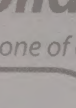


The conference heard that, of 639 referrals to adult protection teams over six months and across nine local authorities last year, only five led to prosecutions (*DN, April*).

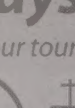
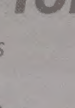
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Shoe scheme back on track

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

Campaigners were "delighted" after a leading shoe retailer performed a U-turn over its plan to scrap a discount scheme for children with different-sized feet.

In January, shoe dealer Clarks ditched a scheme that offered parents a 75 per cent discount on the second pair, when they bought two pairs of different-sized shoes.

This angered parents of disabled children, who joined the charity Steps – for people with lower limb conditions – to campaign against the firm's decision.

Conservative MP Jeremy Hunt, shadow minister for disabled people, backed the campaign, by writing to Clark's chief executive Peter Bolliger.

The company decided to reinstate the scheme in March.

Sue Banton, founder of Steps, said: "We are delighted that Clarks has decided to reinstate the scheme, which benefits hundreds of UK families and children."

Mr Hunt said: "Kitting children out with shoes is expensive enough as it is for parents, as children grow out of them so quickly. But for parents whose children require different-sized shoes it is ten times worse, as they have to buy two different sized pairs."

A Clarks spokesman said: "When we realised that the withdrawal of the service was causing real problems for some of our customers we felt that we should respond."



Trail blazers: Kent County Council has launched new easy access trails covering seven of the county's historic sites. Leaflets show disabled facilities and gradients. Pictured at Tonbridge Castle are Kent councillor Keith Ferrin, Tonbridge and Malling Mayor Derek Still (centre), and Patricia Mitchell and other members of Tonbridge and Malling Access Group.

Veterans win lottery award

A lottery grant of £315,000 should help to improve the health of Gulf War veterans.

The award will allow the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association (NGVEA) to set up a database of members and an administrative centre.

Shaun Rusling, NGVEA vice-chairman, said: "With the database we will be able to assist medical professionals with information regarding ill health suffered by Gulf War veterans and make a direct impact on treatment available to them."

Other grants affecting disabled people from the Big Lottery Fund include:

- £220,000 to the Spinal Injuries Association to help people with spinal cord injuries find work and manage their own ageing process;
- £460,000 to the National Autistic Society to study early detection of autism in children;
- £500,000 to Action for ME to establish an "observatory" that will gather information about factors affecting people with the condition;
- and £375,000 to Mind to study different types of care for people with long-term depression at GPs' surgeries.

Government starts hunt for commissioners

The government has started its search for a chair and up to 14 commissioners for the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR).

CEHR will combine the work of the Disability Rights

Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission. It will combat discrimination based on age, sexual orientation and religion, and promote human rights.

The chair and commissioners* will decide CEHR's priorities and act as its ambassadors.

Meg Munn, deputy minister for women and equality, said that, in order for the commission to succeed, "it is vital that

applicants for the commissioners jobs come from a variety of backgrounds and have first-hand experience of discrimination".

*For more information, tel: 020 7017 0931/912/905 or visit www.cehrappointments.co.uk

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DN05/06

Disabled activists gathered in London to discuss progress towards disability equality, for the London mayor's third Disability Capital conference in March. Elizabeth Choppin reports

Mayor's report reveals widespread disablism

Disabled Londoners still face barriers in employment, post-16 education and accessible housing, according to a new report commissioned by mayor Ken Livingstone.

The report*, launched at London's third Disability Capital conference, tells of "discrimination, harassment and lack of awareness" in key areas, and says services across London are patchy.

Findings show a shortage of accessible housing and that 47 per cent of all housing authorities do not have enough money to meet valid disabled facilities grant applications.

Employers are inflexible in working practices and "ignorant" of their obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Barriers in education include limited access to the right curriculum support and a fear of amassing debt, adds the report.

David Morris (*pictured*), the mayor's policy advisor on disability issues, told the conference: "The huge amount of prejudice many disabled people face has a measurable psychological impact."

"I can see it and feel it reverberate with my own regular experiences. Disablism is as pernicious and damaging as racism, sexism, homophobia and ageism. Its routes are the same as all prejudice: people feeling uncomfortable with difference."

But conference delegate Simone Aspis, parliamentary advisor for the British Council of Disabled People, said aspects of the report do not reflect the experience of the "ordinary disabled Londoner".

She said the report does not address the problems faced by people with learning difficulties. And she said a recommendation for work experience to



be advertised at universities is "elitist". She added: "What about flipping day centres?"

Mr Morris admitted to *DN* that "gaps" exist in the study, but emphasised that it was based on the social model of disability.

**Towards Joined up Lives. For a copy, tel: 020 7983 4100 or visit www.london.gov.uk/mayor/equalities/joined-up-lives.jsp*

Delegates attack GLAD

Campaigners at the conference expressed anger at the current state of London's disability movement.

The capital's leading organisation of disabled people, Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD), did not send an official delegation.

Arguments over the future of GLAD were first publicly exposed at last year's Disability Capital event (*DN*, April 2005).

GLAD has faced criticism over the last year as well as a Department for Work and Pensions investigation into alleged Access to Work fraud by former employees.

Last month, *DN* reported that a tribunal had found the dismissal of GLAD's former director of policy and projects, Brenda Ellis, was unfair, and ordered the organisation to pay her £35,000 compensation.

In his opening address, David Morris said the movement needed to "get together, re-energise ourselves, empower ourselves, and go forward".

Mr Morris told *DN*: "It personally angers me that 50 years of work has been undone by incompetence."

Other conference delegates called for a return to a grass-roots movement.

Act must address vital issues

The government's planned Single Equality Act will be the best chance to improve anti-discrimination laws for the next 20 years, the conference heard.

During a panel discussion, Caroline Gooding, special advisor at the Disability Rights Commission, said the act – likely to be introduced next year – must address issues such as class actions and access to legal aid and tribunals.

She said the "reasonable adjustment" clause from the Disability Discrimination Act, though controversial, should be retained because it allowed for "positive discrimination". Other anti-discrimination laws focused on treating everyone the same.

Human rights lawyer David Ruebain hoped the act would recognise the unique experiences of disabled people.

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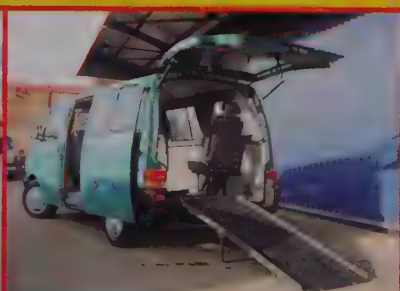
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Drug improves sexual function

The drug tadalafil improved erections in more than eight out of ten men with spinal cord injury (SCI), according to a new study.

Before treatment, just one in ten of the men were able to complete sexual intercourse. But almost half those treated with tadalafil had "successful" sex.

The study at Paris-South University, presented at a

European Association of Urology conference in Paris last month, involved 186 men in four European countries.

David Ralph, a consultant at London's Institute of Urology, said: "The loss of sexual function is one of the devastating effects of spinal cord injury, particularly as many of the men we see have yet to start a family."



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Anger over plans to cut specialist nurses

BY JOHN PRING

Disability charities have accused health trusts of "short-term thinking gone crazy" over plans to cut the number of specialist nurses because of the NHS financial crisis.

The nurses, specialists in conditions such as diabetes and multiple sclerosis (MS), provide support and information and boost independence.

But because they cost more than regular nurses, many primary care and hospital trusts are not replacing specialists who leave their jobs.

It came as the Department of Health announced plans to save more than £400million a year by reducing hospital admissions, partly through using specialist nurses (see below).

A trust survey in January found 27 per cent of about 180 MS specialist nurse posts across England were at risk.

Christine Jones, chief executive of the trust, said it was "short-term thinking gone crazy", as an MS specialist nurse saves a hospital £64,000 a year.

"We have all worked hard to

improve MS services over the last decade and to see them eroded is heartbreaking for people with MS."

Macmillan Cancer Support said it was investigating the scale of the problem.

Natasha Marsland, of Diabetes UK, said cuts could have "a huge impact on the short and long-term health of people with diabetes".

Tim Curry, a policy advisor for the Royal College of Nursing, accused trusts of operating a "very short-term

slash and burn policy".

"Some trusts are targeting specialist nurses because on paper they look quite expensive. But they are helping patients to stay independent and stay out of hospital."

A Department of Health spokeswoman said specialist nurses were "highly valued and essential" and are set to play a key role in providing care closer to patients' homes. "Therefore we would expect trusts to have these nurses at the heart of their plans," she added.



NHS admissions could be slashed

The NHS could save more than £400million a year by cutting the number of emergency hospital admissions by people with long-term conditions, according to a new report.

Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt said the NHS could slash the £1.3billion annual cost of admissions for people with 18 common conditions, such as asthma and angina.

She said better management of these conditions could improve people's lives, reduce emergency hospital admissions and cut costs.

Ms Hewitt said: "Whilst it's important to know the hospital is always there, it's a much better, more stable life for people if they can be treated in the community without the need for so many emergencies."

The 18 conditions include chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, with more than 100,000 admissions a year, costing £253million; and asthma, with more than 60,000 admissions at a

cost of £64million.

The figures came from the NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement, which made a series of recommendations.

These include identifying conditions that account for a disproportionate number of emergency admissions; feeding this information back to GPs; and making more use of community nurses.

Donna Covey, chief executive of Asthma UK, urged trusts to act on the recommendations.

She said about three-quarters of hospital admissions for asthma in the UK were preventable.

She said: "People with asthma who experience frequent symptoms and attacks probably do not have their asthma under control because they are not receiving the right information."

"They need expert assessment to help them identify the reasons for their poor asthma control and to provide them with appropriate treatment and support."

Alzheimer's drug can help

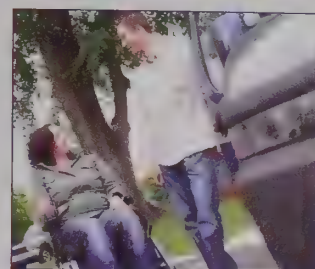
A new study has provided further evidence that a drug that faced having NHS funding withdrawn can help people with Alzheimer's.

The study, reported in *The Lancet*, shows donepezil slows and can reverse deterioration in communication skills and the ability to carry out daily activities in people with severe dementia.

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) is due to issue final guidance in July on whether the drug and two other treatments should be available on the NHS for those with mild or moderate Alzheimer's. The drug is not yet licensed for people with severe Alzheimer's.

NICE's draft guidance said donepezil would only be considered for people with moderately severe Alzheimer's. It had previously said the drugs were not cost-effective and should not be available at all on the NHS.

The Alzheimer's Society said NICE should allow all people with dementia access to the drug.



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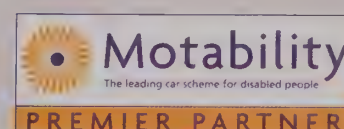
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Mixed fortunes for GB Commonwealth team

BY PRIYA KOTECHA

Disabled British athletes had mixed fortunes at the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, in March, clinching a handful of medals but missing out on several more.

Susan Gilroy flew the flag for England, capturing gold in the table tennis event, matching her 2002 Commonwealth gold, by beating Nigerian Faith Obiora 3-1 in the women's singles final.

In the same competition, team member Catherine Mitton also made her mark, beating Vivian Ozurumba from Nigeria 3-0 to capture the bronze medal.

In the weightlifting, Jason Irving clinched silver, lifting 167.5kg in the open power-lifting competition but narrowly missing out on the gold, after he lifted but could not hold the 175 and 177.5kg weights.

Jason's wife Judith told DN: "I'm so proud of him. He was expecting silver but he felt he could have got gold. He's the only one from the British weightlifting team, able bodied or disabled, to get anything."

In the pool, English swimmer Matthew Walker clinched bronze in the men's 50m freestyle final, with a time



Medal winners: Jason Irving (above) snatched a silver in weightlifting and Susan Gilroy (right) took gold in table tennis

of 28.94secs, 4.1secs short of the silver medal position claimed by Benoit Huot of Canada.

But Walker failed to make an impact in the men's 100m freestyle event, coming fifth with a time of 1min 03.71secs, behind Welsh swimmer Dave Roberts, who clinched the bronze medal with a time of 1min 01.85secs.

In the athletics, Welsh teenager Beverley Jones ensured some home nation success, with a bronze medal in the women's T37 100m race, recording a time of 14.81secs.

Tanni Grey Thompson

missed out on a medal in the women's (T54) 800m final, with a time of 1min 58.33secs, 4.57 secs short of third-placed Diane Roy from Canada.

England and Wales finished second and joint thirteenth respectively in the overall medals table, which combined the results of disabled and non-disabled athletes.

Disabled athletes competed in four different sports under the Elite Athletes with a Disability (EAD) programme.

The Commonwealth Games is the only international sporting event to integrate disabled and non-disabled events.

Record-breaking swimmers

British Paralympic swimmers were on top form at the British Swimming Championships in Sheffield last month, breaking two world, two European and 11 British records.

Matthew Walker and Sascha Kindred made light work of their races, clinching a world record each, as they looked forward to the Disability World Championships in Durban, South Africa, in December.

Walker set a new world mark in the (S7) 50m freestyle, with a time of 28.54secs, beating the previous mark by 0.04secs, set six years ago by fellow Briton David Roberts.

Impressed with his performance, Walker said: "I just can't believe it, but why couldn't I do it last month at the Commonwealth Games?"

Kindred then went on to

break his own world mark by over a second in the (S6) 200m individual medley, clocking a time of 2min 47.46secs.

He said: "I've been doing very well in training where I've put in a lot of endurance-based work, and it seems to be coming together."

Liz Johnson and James Crisp set new European records in the (SB6) 50m breaststroke and (S9) 50m backstroke respectively. Johnson set a time of 48.04secs, while Crisp finished in 31.16secs.

Another nine disabled swimmers broke British records, including Daniel Pepper, who set three new records in the (SB14) 50m and 100m breaststroke with times of 33.76secs and 1min 13.83secs, and 2min 22.66secs in the (S14) 200m individual medley.

Sports funding boosted

The search for young disabled sporting talent has been given a big boost, after the UK's leading body for Paralympic sport received millions of pounds in extra funding.

The British Paralympic Association (BPA) was awarded £6.5million to invest in elite level sport over the next three years, in the run-up to London 2012.

UK Sport also pledged £1.5million to help organise preparation camps for disabled participants in the 2008 Paralympic and Olympic games in Beijing.

The BPA said identifying and developing new talent forms "a major part of the thinking behind the funding allocation", in a bid to help develop the next generation of Paralympians.

The allocation of funding for the various sports will be decided over the coming months.

Chief executive Phil Lane said: "We hope that this will now give the sports the scope to roll out talent identification programmes as well as supporting the current elite."

SPORTS DIARY

Visa Paralympic World Cup, Manchester

1-7 May

Venue See website for details

Media coverage Sunday 7 May, BBC Two - 1.55pm and 3.45pm

More information www.visa-paralympicworldcup.com

National Wheelchair Basketball Championship finals

20-21 May

Venue Guttman Road, Stoke Mandeville

More information Tel: 01296 395 995 or visit www.wheelpower.org.uk

National Wheelchair Tennis Championships

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Venue Plock Court, Tewkesbury Road, Gloucester

More information Tel: 020 7381 7051 or visit www.btf.org.uk

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Mobility Roadshow 2006

The Mobility Roadshow, the world's most unique event for anyone with a mobility problem, makes its debut at a new venue this year. Kemble Airfield near Swindon hosts the event on 8th, 9th & 10th June, offering visitors the opportunity to test drive adapted and specialist vehicles, while in addition providing a showcase for a wealth of mobility products and services from around 170 exhibitors.

Visitors will have a choice of vehicles to test drive from a dozen manufacturers and specialist convertors, and can pre-register to test drive on the Roadshow website at www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk. Tanni Grey Thompson DBE makes a guest appearance at the show on Thursday 8th June - National Young Disabled Persons' Day - awarding the prizes to the winner of the Roadshow's Ready Willing & Mobile competition for schoolchildren aged 7-14.

Whether you are a wheelchair user, or just have difficulty getting around, the Mobility Roadshow offers all kinds of solutions to any mobility problem.

For further details about the Roadshow or the Ready Willing & Mobile competition, call Mobility Choice on 0845 241 0390 or visit www.mobilityroadshow.co.uk

The UK's Most Accessible High Street Awards



DN has teamed up with Scope's Access Equality awards scheme in its search for the best, and worst, examples of high street access across the nation.

The scheme will recognise places and individual businesses where the best efforts have been made to ensure disabled people can access all areas and shop independently. It will also highlight the most inaccessible places.

A team of disabled access experts will choose the best and worst examples of access, based on your nominations of villages, towns, cities and shopping/leisure outlets as well as visits to shortlisted places.

To get involved – and be in with a chance of winning some great prizes – tell us your good and bad experiences of staff attitudes, physical access and information, which have helped or hindered your everyday shopping.



Fill in the form below and post it to the DN address or fill it in online at www.disabilitynow.org.uk or www.accessequality.org.uk

READER NOMINATION

Ian Day picks York as his most accessible place.
He says: "Even though most of York is listed buildings, the whole city is very much geared up for tourism and disabled people and our access problems are well dealt with."
In particular, he likes the main pedestrian centre, where the shops have easy access, the Castle Museum, an accessible ghost tour and the fact that there

are "dropped kerbs all over the place".
But Rotherham is his least accessible place. He says: "Listed buildings take priority over disabled people and they won't even install ramps."
Problems occur, he says, on Ship Hill, where solicitors and estate agents will not install ramps. He adds that there is a severe shortage of dropped kerbs, lifts in the market and library are not repaired fast enough and in the shop Music Zone there are tills on the upper floor and no lift.

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3) Which village, town, city or shopping/leisure outlet do you consider is the least accessible and why?

4) List up to five places there, such as bars, pavements and cinemas, which you feel make the place an access failure. Continue on another sheet if necessary.

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You must fight for human



Campaigners say the Human Rights Act has huge potential to help disabled people fight for their rights. But what impact is the act actually having? Priya Kotecha investigates

Six years ago, 12-year-old Richard Halliday, was told he could no longer attend his social club or receive his weekly 15 hours of support, because his “challenging behaviour” posed a threat to care workers.

His mother Mary turned down an offer of direct payments and gave up her job to care for her son, who has cerebral palsy.

She used the Human Rights Act (HRA) to seek a judicial review of the London Borough of Islington’s decision, which had also introduced new eligibility criteria.

The legal action was successful and the council reinstated Richard’s support.

The family then sought another judicial review using the HRA, after the council refused to pay for a support worker the Hallidays believed could help meet Richard’s needs. The court again ruled in Richard’s favour.

Mary says: “They’re looking at a budget and I’m looking at a human being. We all have human rights to live a reasonable life and a family life and not to be cut off from society and we

must use those rights.”

She expects to have to use the act again, if, as she predicts, there are further problems when Richard’s support is transferred from children’s to adults’ services.

Richard’s is one of many cases in which disabled people and their supporters have tried to use the HRA, since it became law in October 2000.

‘We all have human rights to live a reasonable life and a family life’

The act, based on the principles of equality, fairness, dignity and respect, works like a bill of rights, influencing all other UK laws and policies.

More importantly, however, the act has made it possible for disabled people to challenge public authorities and situations in which they feel their rights have been threatened, for instance, their right to life, their right to a private and family life, and their right not to be discriminated against.

In 2004, Leslie Burke used article two of the act, the right

to life, to challenge General Medical Council guidelines that give doctors the authority to remove artificial feeding from disabled people.

Judge James Munby originally ruled in the High Court that doctors could be prevented from withdrawing artificial food and drink from seriously ill patients, although his decision was later overturned in the Court of Appeal (DN, September 2005, page 4).

The right to life article has also allowed the parents of Charlotte Wyatt to challenge decisions made by their daughter’s doctors.

Charlotte’s doctors said they did not want to resuscitate her if her condition deteriorated.

Although the High Court’s 2004 ruling was that Charlotte did not have to be kept alive by ventilation if her condition deteriorated if doctors believed it was not in her best interests, the act did at least allow her parents to challenge those doctors’ decisions.

Speaking at the Human Rights: Transforming Services? conference in March*, which discussed the impact of the HRA on disabled people, Jane

Campbell, outgoing chair of the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), said the right to life article was one of the most “emotionally loaded and complex rights to be debated”.

“For disabled people like me who are constantly up against society’s belief that our lives are of less quality, the right to life article is literally a matter of life and death. To participate in its development is of vital importance.”

But the act’s powers extend beyond the medical field and into the community.

In 2002, the High Court heard an application by three older disabled people for a judicial review of the Leonard Cheshire Foundation’s decision to close one of its homes in Hampshire, where the trio had been living for more than 17 years.

The three residents argued that the charity’s proposal to move them to another of its institutions breached their right to respect for their home, under article eight of the act: the right to a private and family life.

After an appeal, a judge concluded that the charity could not be classified as a public body and therefore could not breach article eight.

This case raised serious issues about the rights of disabled people who use services provided by a council via private contractors.

The government is expected to launch a consultation document on how to sort out this legal loophole soon and a test case being heard this month will challenge the Leonard Cheshire ruling (*see box, right*).

So how important is the HRA to disabled people?

Judge Munby told the conference that it provided “a bedrock of rights to services, below which the state cannot lawfully go, even if it might wish to politically”.

But Dr Campbell said more disabled people needed to become involved in the human

rights debate, if they wanted to access their rights under the act.

She said: “Human rights must be developed by a range of stakeholders. It must not be the sole domain of lawyers or academics.”

Gerry Zarb, head of health and independent living at the Disability Rights Commission, agrees. He says human rights values “need to be applied to every aspect of a person’s life – at home, at work and within the community”.

He says the principles of human rights and of independent living are inextricably linked.

“Independent living is not the name of a particular type of service, but the purpose of all services. The provision of a high quality support service should be to enable disabled people to participate fully in social and economic life and to secure equal rights, choice and opportunities.”

Katie Ghose, director of the British Institute of Human Rights, which is launching a human rights guide for disabled people in June, said disabled people could also use the act

The Human Rights Act:

Some of the most important articles for disabled people

Article 2 – Right to life strengthens disabled people’s equal right to medical treatment in life-threatening circumstances.

Article 3 – Protects against inhuman or degrading treatment.

Article 5 – Right to liberty. Relevant for people with mental health problems detained against their wishes and disabled people in institutional or community care who lack the capacity to make their own decisions.

Article 8 – Protects the right to a private, family life, home and communications.

Embodies the principles of autonomy, dignity and solidarity. Helps give disabled people the right to independent living and allows them to challenge decisions made by public authorities, which go against these principles.

Article 11 – Right to freedom of assembly and association. Could help disabled people and their organisations to campaign more effectively.

Article 14 – Prohibits discrimination against people in their enjoyment of convention rights.



Battle won: Richard Halliday’s support was reinstated after his mother Mary used the Human Rights Act to argue his case

rights

without resorting to a lengthy legal process.

She says: "Reminding a local authority or voluntary organisations of their obligations under the law can act as a wake-up call and result in improved services not only for the individual concerned but many others as well."

'Reminding a local authority of their obligations can act as a wake-up call'

The future of the act will also depend on the provision of legal aid and comprehensive legal and advocacy support, two key areas which experts believe have restricted the number of disabled people launching cases under the act.

Luke Clements, a consultant solicitor specialising in human rights law and disability, calls for all public service employees to receive training to help promote human rights in the way they carry out their jobs.

He says the Legal Services Commission must also ensure

that vulnerable communities know about their rights and the availability of legal aid and advocacy support.

Prof Clements says disabled people's access to justice under the HRA is undermined by the ongoing decline in the civil legal aid system. He says the government has made the system unattractive to lawyers by paying poor fees and swamping them with paperwork, resulting in fewer lawyers wanting to take on such cases.

He says: "I honestly believe the civil legal aid system will collapse in five years and the government will not do anything until it's collapsed."

Although the government, lawyers and disability campaigners are working to resolve key issues, it is also clear that disabled people will have to educate and empower themselves if they are to take full advantage of the Human Rights Act.

**For speeches and presentations, visit www.scie.org.uk*

***British Institute of Human Rights, tel: 020 7848 1818 or visit www.bihhr.org*

Cases involving the Human Rights Act

Prison indignity: Adele Ursula Price, a wheelchair user, was detained in prison for four days in 1995, during the course of civil proceedings for recovery of debt at Lincoln County Court.

Ms Price spent the first night at Lincoln police station, where she was forced to sleep in her wheelchair. The next day she was transferred to an accessible room at Wakefield prison.

That evening, Ms Price was helped to the toilet by a female prison officer and claims she was left there for over three hours, until a male nursing officer cleaned her and helped her back to bed. She also claimed another female officer undressed her in front of two male officers.

Ms Price launched a legal action against the Home Office under article three of the HRA, which states that: "no-one should be subjected to torture or degrading treatment or punishment".

The court awarded her £4,500 in 2001, plus £4,000 for legal costs, and ruled that the government had contravened article three, although there had been "no intention to humiliate or debase her".

Loopholes: Following the Leonard Cheshire ruling, disability groups, legal professionals and the government are keen to address the loophole which allows private organisations providing services on behalf of local authorities to be exempt from the act.

Now another three older disabled residents are launching a test case against the London Borough of Havering, which has decided to outsource its provision of residential care to a private care provider.

The residents say the council's decision effectively means that they will lose the right to launch a judicial review against the private provider under the HRA, if the service they receive goes wrong.

Yvonne Hossack, the solicitor representing the trio, told *DN*: "It's not clear if the HRA covers private providers and this case will hopefully make that clear."

"I would be very relieved to have the law changed because the fact is my clients are extremely vulnerable due to the commercial considerations of private providers."

Manual lifting: Two severely disabled sisters, looked after by their parents, challenged East Sussex County Council's no manual lifting policy in 2003.

Both received assistance from paid carers but were dependent on lifting for all personal care tasks.

By the time the hearing took place, the council had amended its policy, without admitting it had ever amounted to a blanket ban on manual lifting.

As a result, the issue related to whether the council should have planned for care to include manual lifting or only hoisting, and whether a mixture of both should have been planned.

The judge's decision, which set a new precedent for these type of cases, was that health and safety law does not guarantee the absolute safety of employees but avoids or minimises the risk to staff as much as is "reasonably practicable".

He also ruled that disabled people's human right to dignity, independence and participation in the community under article eight of the convention must be taken into account when assessing risk.

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CELEB SCENE

TANNI GREY THOMPSON

Openly debating the issue of inclusion in sport will boost participation and improve our chances of winning

There is a general acceptance that being physically fit is beneficial for disabled people, but does the public really care about whether disabled athletes are treated the same as non-disabled athletes?

In Canada, a traditionally strong nation for supporting Paralympians, the importance of disabled people competing is being hotly debated.

One participant is Canadian Rick Hansen, a pioneer of disability issues, known as the Man in Motion. Between 1985 and 1987 he pushed himself through 34 countries, and raised 26 million Canadian dollars to support inclusion for disabled people but, he argues, nothing has changed.

Canada is hosting the 2010 Winter Games, and to get it right he believes there has to be inclusion around the world.

There are few journalists prepared to make a stand against such an argument.

A few British journalists,

who have questioned the skills of disabled athletes, have been shouted down without any real debate taking place.

Everyone assumes they are being mean to disabled people. It would be far more productive to use the opportunity to argue both sides and raise awareness of inclusion.

'We do need a sufficient number of people training to sustain elite disability sport'

One journalist who has kept up the debate is Canadian Mary Ormsby. She wrote an article for the *Toronto Star*, stating that you cannot make people feel guilty so they will watch the Paralympics.

She eloquently repeats the usual argument; there are fewer competitors battling for medals than in the Olympics.

She says that at 36, Canadian wheelchair racer

Chantal Petitclerc should be thinking about retirement, not winning more medals.

Mary is right that in many mainstream sports most athletes have ruined their bodies by this age. But she needs to remember that wheelchair racers are more like cyclists than runners; their weight is not carried by their legs, so less damage is done to the body.

I also disagree with her assumption that we are not elite athletes because there are fewer of us. But, instead of painting Mary as a mean person, it is time for debate.

We do need a sufficient number of people training to sustain elite disability sport and more participation from around the world, especially in developing countries.

If Canada is gearing up to the 2010 Games, then 2012 should be enough to inspire us. There will be no better chance to use sport to change perceptions of disability.

Dame Tanni is the UK's most successful Paralympic athlete and a disability campaigner



YOUTH SPEAK

KATE CARYER

There is money to fund wars but not communication aids

I have been such a busy girl over the last couple of weeks that I don't know where to start.

I gave a presentation at the Houses of Parliament to the all-party disability group about the communication aids funding kerfuffle (*see comment opposite*).

It is sad that the funding of communication aids is not very important to our government.

You'd think politicians, of all people, would understand how important having a voice is.

The presentation was the most frightening thing that I have done. I got myself into a right state, but I think it went well.

Just as amazing as my day in the hallways of power was a theatre workshop that I attended.

It was run by the Razor Edge Theatre Company, an organisation which trains

people with learning difficulties to become performers.

I went along not knowing what to expect. I had a vague idea that people with learning difficulties were involved, but I was amazed at how many people attended.

It was a breathtaking session and I got lots of ideas for my work on performing arts.

Razor Edge had plans to run a unique higher education course for people with learning difficulties. Everyone agreed it would be incredible.

Alas, the all-important funding fizzled out, so the course was a non-starter and all parties involved were heartbroken.

In other news, the government has admitted that the Iraq war costs £2.8 million per day.

No funding problems there it seems. Clearly I am in the wrong business.

Kate, 22, is studying for a degree in performing arts and volunteers for 1Voice Communicating Together



WORLD VIEW

ABIGAIL LOCK

It is vital to understand how views on disability vary across the world

I was recently asked which country has the highest quality of life for disabled people.

This seemed a strange question. While there are certain indicators, such as infant death rates, literacy and service provision, everyone has their own ideas about what quality of life means.

What interested me was the assumption that what it means to be disabled is universal.

When I last looked at the proportions of disabled people by country, figures ranged from 21 per cent in Austria to 3.4 per cent in Zimbabwe. There are differences in the ability to collect figures and how nations and cultures define what it means to be disabled.

The ways in which a society perceives and treats people with impairments is often a reflection of their social priorities.

In developing countries, a person's value is often related to their ability to carry out physical labour. Therefore disablism is often directed at people with certain physical impairments which restrict manual labour.

The ability to recite passages from the Koran is important in some Muslim nations, making people with speech impairments and certain learning difficulties a greater target for social stigma.

The Western obsession with the body beautiful will disable people in ways that may not be apparent in other parts of the world.

Although we share a lot of common aims, if we are going to build on the global disabled people's movement it is vital we recognise that the barriers faced in Britain can be quite different to those faced by millions of disabled people the world over.

Abigail has an MSc in gender and international relations, with a focus on disability, and is parliamentary affairs officer at Scope



TOP TALK

PHIL FRIEND

Employment schemes should not push disabled people into jobs, employers must pull them in

Thomas Carlyle, the famous Scottish historian, once said: "Work is the grand cure for all the maladies and miseries that ever beset mankind." Anyone who has spent time queuing for benefit will identify with his comments.

Work isn't just about earning money. It helps define who we are and offers scope for social contacts. It provides opportunities to feel that you are contributing to the community you live in.

Well known psychotherapist Eugene Heimler, who worked with unemployed people in Hendon, found a direct relationship between depression and unemployment. He noted that people despaired if their lives were "without meaningful activity".

Recent government targets for helping one million Incapacity Benefit recipients to return to work and the ambitious target of 80 per cent employment might imply

things are going to change for disabled people. But there is a major issue to address if the government's aims of the government are to be realised.

For as long as I've been connected with employment and disability issues, great emphasis has been placed on preparing the person with the impairment for work.

'We have tended to concentrate our attention on pushing disabled people into work'

Sophisticated rehabilitation programmes, intensive retraining schemes, interviewing courses have all focused on the individual and are designed to make them "more employable".

Less attention has been paid to the requirements of the employer and what might help them to recruit or retain disabled staff.

We have concentrated our attention on pushing disabled people into work rather than encouraging employers to pull them into jobs.

The social model of disability suggests that people with impairments are disabled by the barriers placed in their way. By helping employers identify and dismantle the barriers that prevent the recruitment and retention of disabled people we are much more likely to succeed.

The key to success is providing employers with the appropriate support and technical expertise they need to overcome impairment-based difficulties.

Having an understanding of various conditions will help to reduce stereotyping and assumptions.

If this way of approaching unemployment issues were to take hold, disabled people and employers really do face a brighter future.

Phil is chair of RADAR and co-owner of disability consultancy Churchill, Minty and Friend

Communication breakdown

The campaign to ensure people with communication difficulties get the aids they need went to Downing Street in April. Toby Hewson, a communication aid user, and Carol Sellars, a retired teacher, outline why the government must guarantee provision

I cannot believe that just a year after my last *DN* article, in which I highlighted the potential abuse of communication aid users (*DN, February 2005, page 15*), I find myself campaigning again to help people like me, who are in more danger because funding for aids has stopped.

Communication aids are vital, not only to allow disabled people to lead normal lives but also for their safety.

Having not received my first communication aid until I was 18, I understand how important it is for people to have access to these devices at an early age.

We all have the right to communicate. Young disabled people should be encouraged to use their communication aids and realise they can achieve anything they want to.

I was recently nominated for a BT Childline Award and was very pleased to be chosen as one of the four winners.

I was nominated by a young girl called Beth who said I have inspired her to use her communication aid more and I made her feel important and good about herself.

She also said that I have inspired her to live on her own and have a job eventually.

With funding for these



Take that Downing Street: Toby Hewson (middle) was part of the group that delivered a petition calling for funding to be reinstated

devices stopped, where are young people supposed to get the help they need?

I give speeches in schools and encourage people to see beyond their disability.

I hope that my work demonstrates to those with similar disabilities and their families that they can lead full lives.

The sad thing is that this will only happen if the government is made to realise that funding for communication aids is essential.

We need to ask why this funding has been stopped.

In April I was involved in presenting a petition to

Downing Street as part of Scope's Speak for Yourself Campaign.

Many signatures were received and I hope this petition will make the government realise that disabled people need to have funding for communication devices.

We are just like other people. We want and need to communicate with our friends and families. We also want to lead full and happy lives.

The only way to do this is through the funding of communication aids.

Let's hope that they will now take notice of our needs.

I am sad to learn that the Communication Aid Project funding has ended, so I have come out of retirement to voice my concerns.

I was head teacher at Canon Popham Church of England Primary and Nursery school for ten years until my retirement at the end of December 2005.

The school strongly believes in inclusion and is well known all through the local education authority, special educational needs (SEN) department and Ofsted, for its inclusive methods.

Over the years we have worked hard to ensure that children with special educational needs receive the appropriate resources to learn effectively in a mainstream school, develop effective communication skills and have trained staff to enhance the quality of education for these pupils.

The Communication Aid Project (CAP) has supported this development in a very special way. Parents, carers, the pupils and staff come together to devise programmes which will best suit the child.

The use of communication aids allows disabled children to have a voice and express their needs, findings and feelings, as

is their right to do so.

There were two children with cerebral palsy at Canon Popham Primary. These children have added to the development of other pupils; including an understanding of the needs and requirements of others and developing tolerance of difference.

'Social inclusion will only work effectively if appropriate funding for resources is provided'

We feel that the children at Canon Popham Primary will be better equipped in society when they meet disabled people. This is all due to our SEN children, who would not be in mainstream today if CAP support had not been available.

I strongly believe, and have experience that backs this statement, that social inclusion will only work effectively if appropriate funding for resources is provided.

I would ask the government to reconsider its decision to end funding. Many pupils will be adversely affected.

I have had my opportunity to voice my thoughts, how will disabled children continue to voice theirs without funding?



KEY NOTES

ANDY RICKELL

Disabled people should be involved in the development of policies affecting them

In politics, what doesn't get measured doesn't get done. No-one can be held to account for something people are unaware of and journalists cannot embarrass politicians into action without damning statistics.

Disablism falls into this category, so to do something about it we must ensure it gets measured and exposed.

That was the thinking behind the *Disablist Britain* report written by Demos, Disability Awareness in Action and Scope (*DN April, page 7*).

It was an audit of existing statistics showing the reality of disablism in all aspects of disabled people's lives; early years and education, employment, housing, social care, transport, leisure, social

status and the right to life. They are damning statistics.

Ending disablism depends on the government collecting data – on which it decides priorities – that accurately records disabled people's experiences, including facts and our opinions.

There are two major opportunities to make this happen. First, the Office of Disability Issues will monitor government performance in implementing recommendations of the Improving Life Chances report.

Second, the Audit Commission should monitor implementation of the public sector duty to promote equality for disabled people, which is enforced this December.

Disabled people and our

organisations need to ensure the government measures the critical issues and this means being engaged at the right level.

In the past, engagement has been at a basic level, where researchers have asked questions created by non-disabled people.

Even at a higher level, where disabled people have created the questions asked, non-disabled people still design the resulting policies. We should be included in the research teams and on the project boards which oversee such research and policy making.

We need to be co-producers in any research so the government might actually get the information it needs to make best use of taxpayers' money to tackle disablism.

Andy is executive director for diversity, politics and planning at Scope

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Letters to the Editor

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Parking bay blues

Why doesn't this country adopt a similar system to that in the US to tackle abuse of disabled parking bays.

To my knowledge, at least five states make it an offence to park in any designated disabled parking space without a permit, and a fine if you do.

When I was last there in 1996, disabled parking spaces, even on private land, carried a fine of \$250 for misuse. Also, my then orange badge was accepted.

Peter Wilson, Wallsend, Tyne and Wear.

Your articles on disabled parking bays are interesting, but I think you need to highlight the issue of mobile bays. By that I mean the increasing number of disabled parking bays which seem to move further and further away from supermarket entrances on a weekly basis.

Even at my local Tesco, where a fining system is in place, it is not enforced. But park in a

mother and baby spot displaying your blue badge and they use a tannoy asking you to move.

Only when legislation is brought in, making it an offence to park in any disabled parking bay, will abuse finally stop.

Simon McLeod, by email

Having read about the charging of blue badge holders in hospital car parks (DN April, page 32), I felt I must write in.

I am disabled but not a badge holder or motorist. I think blue badge holders should pay to park their cars where other motorists are charged.

Most disabled bays have marked areas to enable disabled people to get in and out of their cars more easily. This is a good idea but these bays take up more space than others.

If we want equal rights and to be treated the same as non-disabled people then we are going to have to have a price for equality.

Roger Budden, Hampshire

Expert guides ensure homes are accessible

I read with interest your articles on accessible housing (DN April) and letter on building regulations (DN March, page 22).

As an occupational therapist (OT), who regularly recommends adaptations for properties, I agree that the often quoted Part M Building Regulations are weak.

They do not apply to existing homes and are inferior to the British Standards (8300:2001) on which they are based.

I understand your reader's concern that research by disabled people was only included in the appendix of BS8300, but the standard can be useful.

There are, however, a number of local and expert guides, often published by councils, which disabled people and professionals may wish to refer to. The best include the Greenwich guide*, the Islington guide** and Stephen Thorpe's Wheelchair Housing Design Guide.

For example, the Greenwich guide says a minimum door width should be 900mm or 840 where "unavoidable", but M regulations allow a width to be as low as 750mm in some circumstances.

I was recently told about builders of a new house in London, who ignored an OT's recommendations based on the Greenwich guide in favour of M regulations. Their work resulted in narrow doorways of 770mm, poor turning space in corridors, no wheelchair storage area or charging point, a drain point and inaccessible bath instead of a level access shower and no accessible work top space in kitchen.

This property is considered to be accessible by the developers, but the ignored OT estimated the changes needed would cost between £10,000 and £15,000.

In the absence of statutory requirements for existing accessible housing, a council



can insist on developers meeting an agreed standard using section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. If developers do not follow the standard they will have to rectify the matter and bear the costs. Where this does not happen, we will continue to see sub-standard homes and huge wastage of public funds used to fix the problems.

Peter Ashlee, by email

* Accessible Homes. Mobility For Wheelchair Users Within Private Dwellings, Greenwich design guide 2002, Atkinson & Dodd

** Planning and access for disabled people: a good practice guide, available at: www.islington.gov.uk

Doctors should be informed of side-effects

When I heard about the adverse reactions among participants in the TeGenero drug trial, I was reminded of problems many disabled people face.

I am on a cancer drug that made me blind in one eye for several months. My cancer specialist said he had never known this to happen.

I found out about someone who had been on the ethical committee for testing of the drug. He said a small percentage of people had the same side-effect. I don't think drug companies are prepared to disclose side-effects and

doctors do not have time to access all such information.

No-one wants to stop development of new drugs, but drug companies and the medical profession should put in place a better system to evaluate side-effects.

Verite Reily Collins, by email

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XTRA special?

Since its launch in 2001 much has been said about the PowerTrike - "unique", "award-winning", "go-anywhere". But what makes the PowerTrike **XTRA** so special? Is it an electric wheelchair or is it an electric tricycle? Here's what Power-Triker, Patsy Watson thinks, but first the technical questions answered by Andy Gammans, Director of its manufacturer, pdq.

Andy, many people have concerns about the legality of the PowerTrike. How is it legal to use it when it can do up to 16 mph - no electric wheelchair is allowed to be that fast?

The PowerTrike **XTRA** converts almost any manual wheelchair into a dual-purpose vehicle. In one mode it is a Class 2 Invalid Carriage (an electric wheelchair) - in the second mode it is an electric tricycle. The PowerTrike **XTRA** is carefully designed to comply with both the electric wheelchair lawⁱ and, of course, the electric cycle lawⁱⁱ. Obviously we have only achieved this by extensive consultations with the MHRA & the DfT who help make the laws.

So what's the secret? How come other electric tricycles are not allowed in pedestrian areas but your PowerTrike **XTRA** is?

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Well that takes care of the legalities, but what do customers think about the PowerTrike XTRA? We asked Patsy Watson, an MS sufferer from Gotham, Nottinghamshire, what she thinks of it.



I've had my PowerTrike for years, and it's probably the best thing I've ever bought. I wouldn't be without it! I take it with me everywhere - on aeroplanes, boats and train, and, of course, the car. It makes life so much fuller and my two dogs have never been fitter. As you can see from the photo I can PowerTrike to places other wheelchairs cannot reach!

Patsy Watson

ⁱ Statutory Instrument 1988/2268
ⁱⁱ Statutory Instrument 1983/1168

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Sativex is doing the trick so far

I have just read your article regarding the cannabis-based medicine Sativex in the April issue (page 16).

I have multiple sclerosis and have been prescribed Sativex by my neurologist. I have been using it for several weeks.

So far the benefits have been mixed but I have not yet encountered any problems and it is a far better option than using cannabis itself.

I always enjoy reading DN; I am a former chair of Disability North - a leading organisation on disability in the North East.

However, I am always a little disheartened at just how many issues there are that still relate to the on-going fight we disabled people have to engage in to have our basic rights recognised and met.

Keep up the excellent work.

Sandra Wheatley, by email

web watch

All the latest from the Disability Now forums and Have your say pages, found at www.disabilitynow.org.uk

DLA frustration

I'm 40 and have recently been diagnosed with SDP, which is a pregnancy-related disorder, and I now struggle to walk, sit and get out of bed. This condition will last beyond giving birth - I had it at the end of my last pregnancy and was suffering pain eight years after. Obviously I need a bit of help. I have two children. I have applied for DLA but have been advised it will take three months to process. Lizzy

Phone your local social services and ask for Disabled Adults. They will assess your needs, and tell you where you can get emergency care from. You can contact the council finances section and ask about housing benefit, to help with paying your council tax and rent if you pay it. Don't give up on DLA. It takes up to three months for them to get their act together, but if you win an award then it will be backdated to the date you apply. dogposhpaws

To get a blue badge you go to your GP and get a letter saying your walking is now severely limited. You take this to your local Department of Work and Pensions office and fill in the forms. You must take three photographs with you. Robc

You need to go to social services and tell them you are struggling. They can help you and may be able to fight for your DLA. You need to ask them to do a community care assessment so they can find out what level of care you need. Erica

What to look for in a light-weight scooter

I have been advised to purchase a mobility scooter. Does anyone know the name and make of a small light-weight one? My walking is limited so shopping and other activities are now off limits to me. I am looking forward to getting some of my life back. Sally

You really need to talk to someone about the best one for you, as your weight needs to be taken into account when purchasing a scooter. Also, you need to consider what sort of surfaces you will be riding on. Silly Milly

Treat the smaller scooters with great caution, they are for very occasional use and short distances, like from a car boot into a shop once a week or in the supermarket. Mine was not the smallest by far and the leaflets which came with it claimed it was good for walks in the park, among other things, but it is only suitable on ideal surfaces, not real life conditions with slopes up and down crossings. Find a vendor willing to talk all this through with you before you buy. Gee

You must take into account what you need it for. If it's occasional trips to the supermarket or shopping centre, then the lightest littlest three-wheeler would be ok. They are very manoeuvrable and the battery range varies up to around ten miles on smooth, flat surfaces with a maximum weight of eight stone. These scooters are not suitable for trips from home to the doctors or local shops. They are not designed for heavy use on most paths and roadways. dogposhpaws

Small scooters should be called mall scooters because that's all they are good for. Shoprider/freerider scooters are good for going shopping and fit into a car easily. Then there are large scooters and you need a van to move these. They are good for someone who does not have a car, but battery replacement is dear. Tone

backchat

● The revelation that David Beckham, the England football captain, had spoken about his obsessive compulsive disorder, created an inevitable media tornado.

Although his comments came out in an interview to be aired on ITV, his representatives were not thrilled to be contacted by DN. We were rather brusquely asked not to "add to the media coverage with any comments or interviews".

The reason? "David is a very private person..."

Unfortunately, *Backchat* was too busy rolling around on the floor in hysterics to finish the sentence.

● DN was delighted to welcome to its offices Luke Hamill, as he leaves ITV's *The Bill*, to be interviewed for a forthcoming TV programme about our work.

The talented actor and campaigner could soon overtake the likes of Ade Adepitan in the ranks of BBC disabled celebritydom. *Backchat* understands that Luke may be up for a presenter's job on children's TV show *Blue Peter*.

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Standing up for students



For Alex Kemp, university is not a 24-hour party. In fact, he is taking a year off to throw himself into campaigning for disabled students. Elizabeth Choppin discovers how serious his commitment to improving education really is

Who is he?

Alex Kemp, 25, has lived in Manchester for the last six years. He studies social work at the University of Manchester and works part-time at a homeless charity. He has been involved with disability issues since 2000 and has worked as a disability support worker and a student social worker. He has served on various NUS committees and was elected as the national disability officer in February.

Alex Kemp is a serious chap. He is serious about campaigning for equal rights for disabled students. He is serious about his image as the newly elected officer of the National Union of Students Disabled Students (NUS DS) campaign. He is seriously angry about the inaccessible gay scene and the general ignorance of the needs of disabled people. And to be fair, he

has every right to be.

While many of his peers are swilling beer and struggling to make it to lectures on time, Alex is revving up to lead the UK's largest alliance of disabled students – a role he will officially take up at the end of June. With, he says, approximately one in four UK students claiming to be disabled, this is no small feat.

The 25 year old, who has a hearing impairment and a form

of dyslexia, will take a year out from his social work course at the University of Manchester to do the job, which will see him travel all over the UK to visit campuses and organise disability rights campaigns.

"We have to engage students," Alex says. "We have to make sure they are aware of their rights."

Some of the key tasks for the coming year are lobbying the government on legislation,

making all student unions accessible and raising the profile of sex and disability.

Added pressures for students, such as mounting debt and top-up fees, are some of the reasons for rising levels of mental ill health at universities and colleges, he says, which is why NUS DS has been lobbying the government on the draft mental health bill.

"We believe that as a direct result of our work, and obviously the work of other organisations, the mental health bill has now been scrapped," he says.

Whether or not this is true, what is clear is that NUS DS intends to use political campaigning as one of its core tools for change.

'Campaigning for social justice is a big part of who I am'

"I'm talking about real participation and the importance of disabled people taking an active role in shaping the future for themselves. That is certainly one of the key principles that I have – that disabled people should lead their own liberation."

Perhaps not surprisingly, NUS DS has come out in full support of Lord Joffe's assisted dying for the terminally ill bill and have partnered up with organisations such as Dignity in Dying to promote the "right to choose".

"We don't tell [disabled people] they should or shouldn't, but we believe the choice should exist, particularly for an individual who is in a large amount of pain and who has made that choice rationally," Alex says, adding that safeguards in the bill and good palliative care are both important.

"Cross liberation", of those facing multiple discrimination, is also one of the areas Alex is focusing on this year.

His says his own experiences of being gay, disabled and raised in care homes gave him a keen survival instinct and the ability to speak up for himself.

"When I left care, I didn't have anywhere to go back to. As a result, campaigning for

social justice is a big part of who I am."

He says that after being dumped from the care system at 16, he worked in hotels, bars and shops and did his A-levels at night in order to attend university.

Like other students with sensory impairments, he has had to deal with "rubbish access" in lectures, tutors who continually ignore his needs and "basic stupid attitudes" of staff, for whom disability awareness training is not mandatory.

He says getting notes in advance, videos with subtitles and transcripts, or documents in the proper format "is a nightmare".

"One of the key things for me is that access at universities and college is resolvable," Alex adds. "There are ways of getting over this – it can be sorted. Often, the basis [of the problem] is rooted in people's laziness and ignorance. And as a campaign, one of our responsibilities is to draw attention to that."

Alex is not sure what his future holds beyond his next year working for the NUS. He will qualify as a social worker at the end of his course – but it sounds as if he is open to various paths.

"I'm very tempted by campaigning for equality. I'd love to go into politics. There are lots of different options, but whatever I do, it will be involved in social justice."

So what does he make of the new "caring Conservatives" with David Cameron bringing disability near the top of the agenda?

"Don't get me started," he seethes. "The Conservatives are a hateful party and they always will be. They will always be a party that is interested in lower taxes and less equality."

It is a challenge to get this "politician in the making" to reveal what he does when he is not campaigning.

"You mean what do I do for fun?" he asks, almost surprised. "I love Manchester. I like to go out with my friends... Scrabble?"

He may be serious, but for disabled students across the UK, that can only be a good thing.



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Take a different road





Sex, secrecy, taboos and catch-22s

A year on from *DN*'s major survey on sex and relationships, significant barriers to healthy and happy relationships persist. In a special issue of the Simon Says column, survey author Simon Parritt and readers explore some of those barriers. They say *DN* and its readers need to work together to enforce change

Simon says: With more than 1,100 replies, the *DN* Time To Talk Sex questionnaire was one of the UK's largest surveys of disabled people and certainly the most significant concerning our sexual well-being*.

Of all *DN*'s surveys, it had the largest response within the shortest time. The results, and apathetic response from most disability organisations,

demonstrated all too clearly how the continued taboo over sex and disability is damaging disabled people's chances of having fulfilling relationships.

Many disabled people experience a lack of information as well as significant distress and anguish around their sexual and personal relationships.

The survey found that over 93 per cent of those who had

no-one to talk to about their sexuality had poor body image and sexual self-esteem. But we found that sexual self-esteem improved considerably if they had someone to talk to.

It is not surprising then that nearly two thirds of you would use a specialist counselling service if available and three quarters of you wanted a free, government-funded service.

In one of the new case studies here, attitude and ignorance get in the way; we must ensure disabled people's sexuality is not dismissed as too "complex" to support.

Whilst access in terms of "ramps and loops" may be improving, ignorance of us as sexual beings continues to be the core problem.

Whilst centres of excellence

exist, they are often the result of an enlightened individual rather than policy. These services often fail us when the individual retires or moves on.

After nearly 30 years of such services being drip-fed funds – including one I was director of, SPOD (The Association to Aid the Personal and Sexual Relationships of People with a Disability) – services have

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Shaun Cropper

Disability Issues Policy Officer, Leicestershire County Council

With the Disability Equality Duty coming into effect in December 2006, public authorities will be required to publish their Disability Equality Schemes. Part of this process **requires the involvement of disabled people** (both employees and service users) in the design, implementation, delivery and monitoring of the Schemes. This will be crucial in order to identify differing service delivery needs and to understand the specific barriers preventing disabled people from fully participating in public life

With **forthcoming Guidance on Involvement** due to be published by the Disability Rights Commission, this conference is aimed at corporate services, HR, strategic planning and legal directors in public sector organisations and all other senior managers who will be responsible for implementing the new Duty. The conference will be relevant across the public sector to central government departments and agencies, local authorities, health trusts, housing organisations, FE and HE institutions and criminal justice organisations.

For further information contact Gemma Suter on 0207 324 4363,
email gemma.suter@neilstewartassociates.co.uk

We need more trained advisors

I am a student and a wheelchair user and lost my virginity fairly late compared to my non-disabled friends.

My current boyfriend has not asked questions about sex, but he will if the relationship gets serious and I do not know where to go for advice.

I set out to discover how easy it is for a disabled person to get advice from the NHS.

In Southampton, I can go to my student union for help. There you can get free condoms and advice easily. I also made an appointment with the nurse at my surgery. She spoke down to me and suggested my needs were "complicated". My GP tried to be more helpful. He gave me leaflets and advice about contraceptive options.

Southampton's main NHS clinic, The Quay to Health, is in a leisure centre. It is accessible and they also have a helpline.

Another option is No Limits, a drop-in advisory service for people up to age 25.

It has a sexual health clinic

every Monday.

For sexual health tests I tried to contact the main Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic at the Royal South Hants Hospital, which is accessible. I tried to find out how long their waiting lists were, but there was no website information and no-one returned my calls.

I phoned Southampton Primary Care Trust about local services. A spokesperson said improvements had been made to services, such as the introduction of lifts and induction loops, but was unable to give me details about specific clinics or training in disability issues.

A letdown in all the places I visited was the leaflets. None of them addressed disability issues and they were only in one format with small text.

Sex is normal and we shouldn't be ashamed of it. There should be advisors who can answer questions you have without making you feel like you are doing something wrong.

DN reader

The right position

I'm in my 40s and married to a very kind and understanding man. I have several conditions, which mean I am often frail, in pain and tired.

I'm ashamed to admit that I have little knowledge about sex; my first marriage was a 20-year fiasco, in which sex hardly featured.

Medical professionals have told me to "find positions that suit", but how do you discover these positions?

I'm too embarrassed to ask for more detailed advice because, at my age, people presume I already know.

Even if clinics were accessible and informed, it is difficult for me to get out the house and I cannot afford private appointments.

Are there any websites that would give useful information in a straightforward and unembarrassing way?

I just want to enhance our relationship without doing my back in.

DN reader

fallen by the wayside.

SPOD's first report in the 1970s showed disabled people's sexuality was being ignored by mainstream services and should incorporate disabled people into their work. But today, we continue to be let down by the vast majority of service providers due to a lack of training and often inexperienced staff. There is a persistent lack of access both in terms of attitude and environment.

We see this in Louise's report where she has noticed how limited services are for people with physical impairments.

Over the last 20 years, the balance has shifted as more independence has been gained for people with learning difficulties. This interest probably has more to do with negative aspects of sexuality such as abuse, disease and unwanted pregnancy, rather than promoting a positive image of sexuality.

Our Southampton case study states: "I do not know where to go for advice."

Health professionals do not see sexuality and disability as something central to their work or training. This is a catch-22 situation. Few try to access services because no one knows how to, and no professionals want to deal with us. They justify the lack of funding for training by saying we don't turn up to appointments and there is a lack of demand.

Responses like: "No-one is trained to deal with that – ask

your GP for a referral" and "we have never had anyone with disability" are sadly common.

While the Disability Discrimination Act has improved access in many areas, sexual health and well-being is an area where we desperately lack equality of opportunity.

We can be very puritanical about sex and rather negative about therapy, agreeing with those who see it as a sign of weakness or just an indulgence.

Until we change this, we will fail to change the plight of many disabled people.

The taboo subject of impairments that make masturbation difficult or just plain impossible is an example of this.

'We must ensure disabled people's sexuality is not dismissed as too "complex" to support'

Access to physical assistance is shrouded in secrecy. The law, as well as professional guidelines, should be clear that such help is permitted and legitimate.

It is just assistance for a basic need that every other human being can experience by choice.

Closest to my heart, psychosexual therapy should be widely available and free in every primary care trust area.

We need change in numerous areas, many beyond those mentioned in our case studies. For change to happen

DN needs you to participate in detailed investigations into provision.

I would hope the relevant services and organisations, from family planning and sexual health clinics to disability charities and dating agencies, begin collecting information on the number of disabled people they deal with so the proportion of us catered for is equal to our proportion in the community.

Simon Parritt is a chartered counselling psychologist.

* Full survey results and other articles on sex and relationships at: www.disabilitynow.org.uk/timetotalksex



Get involved: You have heard the stories and read the survey results but without testing services across the country, improving provision and access is going to be difficult.

DN is looking for disabled people who can investigate, test and comment on access in the following areas:

- counselling and psychosexual therapy
- sexual health and family planning, including pregnancy services
- sex education and information in schools, homes, government and voluntary sector services
- dating and socialising services
- domestic violence support services

To get involved, please email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk or write to the usual address. You can also comment on our time to talk sex forum at: www.disabilitynow.org.uk

There is nowhere to go for advice

I am a volunteer for Scope and hoping to get involved in a project on personal relationships, for which the charity is seeking funding.

The aim will be to support people with physical disabilities to gain knowledge on issues around managing relationships, whether they be friendships, sexual, social or family.

This is important to me, as I know too many disabled people who lack knowledge about these issues and how they can access related services.

In researching for this project, we found a lot of support for people with learning difficulties but nothing for people with physical impairments.

People may need very specific advice on issues relating to their disability and the knowledge is not there. Too often, people do not even know who to contact for advice.

Because disabled people can be isolated from society,

too many are unaware of the simple differences and concepts of relationships.

By becoming a trainer on the personal relationships project, I hope to support people and give them a chance to explore these issues.

My own personal experience will play a big role in this and show people that this does not need to be a taboo subject.

There is a lack of knowledge on services available and what they are there for.

They are rarely advertised and there is stigma attached to contacting them. When I tried to contact my local family planning clinic I couldn't get through on the phone and my email bounced back.

There is definitely a need to improve services. Currently, people often cannot get basic advice. Without services and improved awareness, disabled people will not feel able to participate fully in society.

Louise Jones

Services are ignorant and unhelpful

For any service, regardless of ability, access begins with the receptionist. For a disabled person, who may be shy asking questions about sex, I have discovered finding answers is a daunting and possibly degrading experience.

From my own experience as a wheelchair user, I know non-disabled people can be shocked that disabled people have sex. Still, I thought services in Middlesex, where I live, would be open to the idea, but they weren't. There are few, if any, counsellors or therapists trained to deal with the sexual needs of disabled people.

E-mail contact with clinics was largely ignored and websites contained no relevant information. From the few responses I got, replies included: "not sure, I think so"; "I don't know to be honest, my manager is in a meeting"; and "don't know, we have never had anyone with disability".

When I mentioned that I had specific questions about my

disability to a receptionist from a psychosexual therapy service, I was told: "There's no difference for disabled people – are you trying to tell me there is?" I was not impressed.

Elsewhere, someone admitted: "No-one is trained to deal with that – ask your GP for a referral." One receptionist told me: "As far as I know, at another clinic, there is a lift".

I had some success at an accessible NHS Walk-in Centre. The volunteer receptionist said there was a GP trained in disability issues who is available once a week.

In all cases, I asked about information in different formats. Most had induction loops and one clinic had a large print brochure.

Private clinics were most insulting when I enquired about access and services. One response was: "Sorry, we don't deal with anything like that." Another responded: "It's not for disabled people."

Sandy Eifion-Jones

Getting relief

I have talked to many disabled male friends who are unable to relieve themselves physically.

One person told me they find it impossible to ask personal assistants (PA) to help; it is not something you can add to a job description.

Even if a PA does assist, it is at his or her discretion and can make people feel unsafe.

A number of these friends ask how they can obtain paid sex but have concerns about doing this, especially with their limited communication skills.

For some the need for relief drives them to pursue risky ventures which leave them vulnerable. But not getting relief can cause mental distress so it is a no-win situation.

Often, a friendly ear and some sensible advice helps. I find the internet is a good forum for this, but these issues do need long-term solutions and everybody has a responsibility to address them.

DN reader



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BETWEEN THE SHEETS



Time to get equal



Tony Manwaring joins campaigners outside No 10.

Pledges to Downing Street

Two years after the launch of Scope's Time to Get Equal pledge, the names of 30,000 signatories were handed to No 10 calling for equality for disabled people. A clear message was sent to the government that there are many barriers still to break down.

Scope's Chief Executive, Tony Manwaring, was joined by Jeremy Hunt MP the Conservative Spokesperson for Disabled People, Danny Alexander MP the Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Disabled People and 10 year old campaigner Nathan Giles.

Tony Manwaring said: "The pledges demonstrate the public's commitment to ending disablism, however we realise that there is still a lot of work to be done before disabled people enjoy the same life chances as non-disabled people as pledged by the government."

Scope launches Local Government Manifesto

To mark the local government elections which will be taking place on 4 May 2006 Scope has launched a local government manifesto. The manifesto calls on local authorities to work in partnership with disabled people and their organisations. It focuses on independent living, inclusive education, transport and the built environment and diversity. A copy of Scope's Local Government Manifesto can be found at: www.scope.org.uk

Speak for Yourself Campaign – 8,000 signatures collected!

Members of Parliament from all of the three main parties joined with communication aid users to highlight the lack of equipment and support and to mark the ending of the Communication Aid Project in March.

Supporters called for the establishment of a joined-up communication service, to meet the changing equipment, training and support needs of people with communication impairments, from birth through to adulthood.

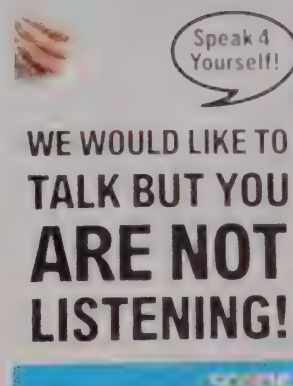
After meeting with MP's, supporters of the campaign handed in the signatures of 8,000 people to No 10.

A big thank you to all of the Speak for Yourself supporters who have worked so hard to collect

signatures for the recent petition.

The 8,000 signatures collected clearly demonstrates the public concern over the issue.

Time to Get Equal will continue to campaign to enable



Speak for Yourself campaigners meet MP's.

For more information on any of the articles featured see www.timetogetequal.org.uk or contact Abigail Lock on 020 7619 7253.

Dream became a nightmare

Professional rugby coach Michael Gregory thought his career could continue after becoming disabled, but his club had different ideas. He hopes improved awareness of reasonable adjustments will ensure others do not experience the same barriers

In 1982 I became a professional rugby league player for Warrington and was later made captain.

My rise through the ranks continued, with the captaincy of Great Britain in 1989 and then beginning as coach, with St Helens, after retiring as a player in 1996. With further experience, I landed my dream job as head coach of Wigan in 2003 and looked forward to a long and challenging career in the sport.

But this was soon to change, due to the attitude of my employers when I became disabled.

In January 2003, whilst performing international duties as a coach in Australia, I received a tick bite and had a bout of flu on my return – but thought nothing of them. I later noticed a distinctive red-ringing rash, but dismissed it, and then had arthritis in my right wrist and neck, but put it down to years of rugby.

However, following investigations in December 2003 I was diagnosed with progressive muscular atrophy and a chronic infection due to the bite.

'I could not believe that they were paying me to stay away'

Despite this, I was focused on the club and getting the team to the Challenge Cup in Cardiff. So, when I was offered treatment in the US in April 2004, I delayed taking it up until I had led Wigan to Cardiff in May.

On my return from a week's treatment, I expected to go back to work, but the club chairman told me to stay at home. I was impatient to return; I was as fit as when I had taken the team to Cardiff. My GP, who agreed that I was fit to return to work, sent a letter with a medical update.

At the time, I could not have imagined the horrendous battle ahead, which I might have lost were it not for the support of my wife Erica, Neil Derrick of

the GMB and Charles Hantom of Whittles Solicitors. This was my dream job and we were up for the fight.

For the next six months, the club was given medical reports from a number of medical specialists, including one of Britain's leading neurologists, who all said I could return to work with reasonable adjustments, such as a phased return, flexible working and the use of interpreters and other aids.

Surely now I could return to work? No. The club said it needed another opinion from another neurologist and appeared to be shopping around for a report that would suit its purpose. But its report illustrated that while I had needs, it was the club's responsibility to address these.

With all this information, you would think third parties would have been brought in, such as Access to Work. No, I received a letter in December 2004 saying that I was on "garden leave" until the end of my contract.

I could not believe that they were paying me to stay away, instead of utilising my skills, knowledge and extensive experience. After dealing with everything – the medicals, illness, fighting to return to work – why was this happening?

In one letter, I was described as "a physically crippled" head coach. I was not seen as a rugby league professional, captain of Great Britain and successful head coach, who has physical difficulties but the support of all his medical team to return to work.

So, the only option was an employment tribunal, which, in March 2006, awarded me £17,500. As I said at the time: "The sum of £17,500 is important for the fact that it is at the level the courts reserve for the most serious cases of discrimination." We felt vindicated, but this case was not about money, it was about the recognition that wrong had been done.

Unfortunately, reporting of



Sporting chance: Michael (right, with wife Erica) reflects on discrimination and lost opportunities

this case by some local and national newspapers missed the point. These journalists accepted the Wigan press release without question.

I have realised that, due to a general lack of understanding of the rights of disabled people, too many people assume that those who are ill cannot work. I could have worked had Wigan acted as a good

employer would have done.

This situation just makes a mockery of everything disability rights campaigners and my team have fought for – equality of opportunity. It comes down to a lack of awareness and as a consequence people can be misled with the poorest excuses and miss out unnecessarily on their dreams.

Meanwhile, I am writing my memoirs, which I hope will be published later this year.

Other coaches and sport journalists still contact me regularly for my opinion on rugby matters, so at least my knowledge and experience are being used. I am just saddened that the situation means I will never be given my dream job again.



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Second chance at life

Hannah Carty is recovering from the heart transplant that put her in the history books. Her father Steve is grateful that she has been given a second chance at life when so many children are still refused treatment because of their disability

Our daughter Hannah celebrated her third birthday in November 2005. In February this year she became only the second child in the UK with Down's syndrome to have a heart transplant.

At birth Hannah did not

have any problems; she ate, slept and fed like a baby should. However, just before her second birthday, she was diagnosed with leukaemia, a condition more common in Down's syndrome children.

Hannah was admitted to the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle, where she was treated with love and care, as were all children on the ward.

The intensive chemotherapy required to treat the cancer left her with a heart condition

known as cardiomyopathy, which is where the heart's function is impaired. In Hannah's case the left-hand side of her heart was enlarged and not beating as powerfully as it should.

We were told that her condition could go one of three ways; it could improve, stay the same but require daily medication, or deteriorate and require a heart transplant.

The condition was diagnosed in May and in early July Hannah suffered heart failure. She was admitted to the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle.

We were told that each child is assessed before being placed on the heart transplant list.

The assessment looks at each child as an individual and the fact that she had Down's syndrome would not affect the assessment.

We were also told by the staff that if Hannah had been born with Down's syndrome ten years ago she would have been immediately excluded from the list. Incredibly, other hospitals in the UK would still refuse to put her on the list.

You can imagine our shock and disgust at hearing this. Can you imagine the outcry if a child was excluded because of race or gender? Here we are in the 21st century and children are excluded from life-saving operations because of their disability.

Luckily for Hannah and us, the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle is leading the way by removing barriers and

changing attitudes on cardiac transplants.

Hannah was in the hospital for eight months awaiting a suitable donor.

Throughout that time she was looked after superbly. In no way was she treated differently from any other child. We are not able to praise the hospital staff enough.

Throughout her life, Hannah has been supported by a special needs team. This team covers all aspects including teaching, playing, physiotherapy and health.


She has recently been assessed for mainstream school and the support required for her to attend is being made available.

'Children are excluded from lifesaving operations because of their disability'

Her local school is very keen for Hannah to be a pupil there because they believe integration is important for all children.

All of the professionals we have encountered in relation to Hannah and her life have had a positive attitude. We have not encountered any discrimination because of her disability, although this might not always be the case.

It is a shame to think that, if we did not live in the north east of England, the outcome may have been different and Hannah would not be with us now.



TEEN SPIRIT

DANIEL GEORGE

An assistance dog can make a huge difference to the lives of disabled youngsters

When my assistance dog Yogi won the Crufts Friends for Life competition it was overwhelming. I'm so proud of him and I love him to bits.

I first met Yogi in June 2004 at a Dogs for the Disabled information day. I remember when they brought Yogi in because he came up to me and wagged his tail. I fell in love with him that day.

In October 2004 my mum and I went to Dogs for the Disabled to work and train with Yogi. I brought him home in November.

Before I got Yogi I was dismal and didn't like to go out of the house. Now I am happy and enjoy going out. With Yogi by my side I feel more confident and independent.

Yogi helps me in ways other

people take for granted. He switches on lights, opens doors, takes my clothes off (including my socks) and picks things up that I drop. This means I don't have to keep asking mum for help, and Yogi never says "in a minute Daniel".

'With Yogi by my side I feel more confident'

If I do need mum Yogi barks so she knows I need her.

I like everything about Yogi, but what I like best is how he knows when I'm sad. He might take off my socks or bring me the TV remote even though I haven't asked him. It's as if he wants to make me smile again.

Yogi can still be mischievous. Sometimes he goes around the

house trying to take people's socks off or pulls the washing off the radiators. Occasionally, when mum is trying to put my socks on, Yogi pulls them off again, but I know he is only trying to help.

I cannot imagine my life without Yogi. He is my best friend and is always there for me no matter what.

He sleeps in my room at night, often on my bed, which makes me feel safe and secure.

Yogi has made such a difference to my life. I want to see dogs like him help other disabled youngsters and make their lives as happy as Yogi has made mine.

So, I say to all the mums of disabled children; if you get the chance to get a Yogi, take it and make your child happier. That's what my mum did.



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Film



The Ringer



This controversial but daring comedy is unlike anything produced by the Farrelly brothers to date. It breaks from their usual recipe of dirty jokes and slapstick humour with a thought-provoking insight into people with learning difficulties. This is reflected in its endorsement from the Special Olympics.

When Steve Barker (Johnny Knoxville) asks for a promotion, he is told he must fire the company's long-serving janitor, Stavi (Luis Avavlos).

To soften the blow, he asks Stavi to work for him, but he

loses several fingers in a lawnmower accident and has no medical insurance.

Strapped for cash to pay for Stavi's treatment, Steve turns to his slimy, debt-ridden uncle Gary (Brian Cox), who suggests that Steve rigs the Special Olympics, an exclusive sports event for athletes with learning difficulties.

Gary convinces Steve to enrol as "Jeffy" in a bid to beat the six-time gold medal-winning pentathlete Jimmy (Leonard Flowers) who Gary will bet against.

However, lacking sporting ability on the field and acting skills off it, Steve is soon found out by his fellow competitors. As one athlete tells him: "I've seen better



acting in porno movies."

But, desperate to see Jimmy finally beaten, they help train Steve using some hilariously unconventional techniques, such as releasing a greyhound from the blocks to chase after him and

make him run faster.

Although at times stereotypical and patronising, this film is definitely worth watching, especially for the moments which make you laugh uncontrollably.

Priya Kotecha

Dance



Candoco



Candoco celebrates its 15th anniversary this year with a double bill,

which is touring the UK.

The first act, *The Journey*, is in the old Candoco style, involving seven dancers, including two wheelchair users.

The piece includes some fast and occasionally chaotic movement set to a unique

musical score. The show is also littered with harsh sound effects, which I found a little hard on the ears.

However, the dancing is awe-inspiring, with daring moves from paraplegic dancer Marc Brew, complemented by astonishing feats of strength from dancers who lift and manoeuvre him with perfect co-ordination and rhythm.

The second act, *In Praise of Folly*, is beautiful yet unnerving, and is more akin to acting than dance.

The piece is dark and serious with the dancers forming a set of visual images very much like

Renaissance paintings.

In this performance James O'Shea (who is a double leg amputee) hangs upside down from a ladder like a sinister human bat, whilst Marc Brew is tortured on a table in mid-air.

This half of the show did leave me feeling slightly disturbed and I would have enjoyed a more uplifting example of integrated movement. But, I now have an even greater respect for the way Candoco has pushed the boundaries of contemporary dance.

For further venues and dates, tel: 020 7704 6845, www.candoco.co.uk

Fred Walden



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TV news

Shed. £10. Tel: 020 8351 6161, www.chickenshed.org.uk

• Former *Eastenders* actress Tamzin Outhwaite stars in *Vital Signs* as Rhoda Bradley, whose 18-year-old son Jason has cystic fibrosis. The show charts her life as she goes from stacking supermarket shelves to training to become a doctor. * ITV, Thursdays, to 4 May, 9pm.

• Chicken Shed theatre company's production *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is being shown on Sky this month. The show features a cast of over 100 actors, music, dance and integrated sign language. * Artsworld channel (Sky digital channel 267), 20 May, 10am, 21 May, 8am ** The production is available on CD and DVD from Chicken

• The second series of *Beyond Boundaries* is currently being filmed in Namibia, following the adventures of ten disabled travellers trekking across Africa. The itinerary includes the Namibian desert, the Skeleton coast and the Etosha national park. The new series will be shown on BBC2 in the autumn.

• Channel Five pays tribute to Matt Lucas and David Williams in its *Showbiz Marriage* series, which charts the rise of famous showbiz pairings. Lucas and Williams are the creators of *Little Britain*, whose characters include wheelchair-using Andy. * *Little Britain: A Showbiz Marriage*, 5 May, 9pm.

What's on



Film

The Devil and Daniel Johnston is an award-winning documentary charting the life and music of Daniel Johnston, who has mental health problems. It includes performances and testimonials.

The Cinema Exhibitors' Association Card entitles disabled people to one free ticket for a person accompanying them to the cinema. £5 processing fee. Valid for three years.

• Application forms available from cinemas or www.ceacard.co.uk

Theatre

Alison Moyet and Dawn French play sisters in *Smaller*, which tells the story of a school teacher caring for her disabled mother. The show is at London's Lyric Theatre until 6 May. From £10.

• Tel: 0870 890 1107

Joe Penhall's comedy *Blue/Orange* will be at the Octagon theatre in Bolton from 4-27 May. The play is set in a psychiatric ward where patient Christopher claims that the oranges he sees are actually blue. There will be an audio-described performance on 24 May, and a BSL-interpreted performance on 25 May. From £7.

• Tel: 01204 520 661, www.octagonbolton.co.uk

Exhibitions

Fame!, which explores concepts of fame and celebrity from the perspective of people with visual impairments, is at the National Portrait Gallery to 6 August. The exhibition includes tactile exhibits. Audio guides are available. Free.

• Tel: 020 7321 6639, www.npg.org.uk/fame

Music

Signs of a Diva returns for a national tour from 5 May to 24 June. Performed by sign-songstress Caroline Parker, the show incorporates signed versions of famous songs by divas including Aretha Franklin and Dusty Springfield. The tour begins at the Albany in Deptford, London, on 5-6 May.

• Tel: 020 8692 4446, www.thealbany.org.uk

For more What's on: www.disabilitynow.org.uk

👍👍👍 excellent

👍👍 very good

👍 good

👍 OK

👎 poor

Books



Ludmila's Broken English
DBC Pierre
Faber, £12.99

Ludmila's *Broken English* is the latest novel from DBC Pierre, who won the Booker prize for *Vernon God Little*.

It tells the story of conjoined twins Blair and Gordon, who are separated after 33 years and released from the institution in which they have spent all their lives.

Improbably, sex (in the form of Blair's desperate and gauche attempts to rid himself of his virginity) and drugs (in the form of cherry-flavoured solipsidine hydrochloride, which relieves the taker of all conscience) propel them by plane to a war-torn former Soviet state, where they hook up with Ludmila, a young Russian bride sold over the internet.

This is an angry commentary on global capitalism and exploitation of east by west. It also seems to comment on the current prime

minister and his heir apparent. This is suggested by their names and their release from the institution "one Tuesday in May".

There are hints and scraps of ideological difference – Blair the free marketer and lover of all things American and Gordon the egalitarian who longs for a full English breakfast and a return to their care home, Albion House.

But to be frank, the book's political satire seems bemusingly underworked. It gives few insights into the experiences of conjoined twins and precious little in the way of character development overall.

For a rich and insightful look at the life of conjoined twins I would recommend Darin Strauss' *Chang and Eng*. This is the story of conjoined twins who lived between 1811 and 1874 and travelled from Siam to America where they became celebrities, married two sisters and fathered 21 children.

Agnes Fletcher

Audiobooks



In Simon Beckett's gripping thriller *The Chemistry of Death*, read by Greg Wise (Random House, £15.99), one



of the key protagonists is a wheelchair user, following a car accident.

Most readers will be familiar with Charles Dickens' Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol* or Victor Hugo's Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and more recently Christopher in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (all available on audio), but such examples of key disabled characters in literature are, it seems, relatively rare.

In *The Chemistry of Death* Dr Henry Maitland is outwardly a 'pillar of the community' but, without giving too much away, he becomes increasingly sinister as his role in the gruesome murders in the Norfolk village of Manham is unmasked.

A more mysterious character is the blind healer La Draga in Sarah Dunant's *In the Company of the Courtesan*, narrated by Tom Hollander

Orphan of Angel Street



(Time Warner, £15.99).

Set in 16th century Italy, the story unfolds through the eyes of the courtesan's sharp-witted companion Bucino, who is height restricted.

In Louis Sachar's *Small Steps*, read by Curtis McClarin (Bloomsbury, £14.99), ten-year-old Ginny, who has cerebral palsy, is a more positive and empathetic figure, who helps her wayward teenage neighbour get back on the straight and narrow.

More minor roles are given to the Haydn-loving Miss Mack, who is blind, in Maeve Binchy's latest offering *Star Sullivan*, read by Olivia Caffrey (Orion, £8.99), and Susan, who is paraplegic, in Annie Murray's *Orphan of Angel Street*, read by Frances Barber (Macmillan, £9.99, cassette). Both are somewhat stereotypical saintly characters. Some things never change.

Vidar Hjordeng

Book news

• Frank Gardner's memoir *Blood and Sand* describes how he became a wheelchair user after being shot in Saudi Arabia. Bantam Press, £18.99, pub. 8 May.

• *Rebuilt: How Becoming Part Computer Made Me More Human*, by Michael Chorost, is an account of how his cochlear implant took him from a silent world to a 'cyborg' who was able to connect to machines. Souvenir Press, £18.99, pub. 4 May.

Children's

• *How do you feel, Thomas?* is based on the *Thomas the Tank Engine* series. The book is aimed at children with autism. £5.99. 30p from each sale goes to NAS, pub. 2 May. Available to buy online at www.egmont.co.uk and www.autism.org.uk

• Emma Laybourn's *Minus Magic* tells the story of Ned, a disabled boy who saves his new school when it comes under attack. Anderson Press, £4.99.

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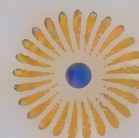
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Suzuki Liberty & Suzuki Life are totally unique. Suzuki Liberty offers full wheelchair access in a compact motorcar whilst Suzuki Life delivers full independence for wheelchair drivers with fully automated access solutions and disabled driver hand controls plus a fully **automatic gearbox**. Whilst others in the UK have focused their attentions on producing converted vans, we took the view that people with disabilities deserved better. The outcome; two superb mobility products. **New & Used in stock**

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Fiat Doblo Liberty

Fiat Doblo Liberty from Jubilee is quite simply the best value for money wheelchair accessible vehicle ever, offering far better value for money and much better access than equivalent Kangoo or Berlingos. We have just five unregistered 2005 models which we are able to offer at additional savings which means that you can now own one of these superbly spacious five seater accessible MPV's with over 60 inches of rear passenger headroom for even less. **BRAND NEW , 1.9 Turbo Diesels with A/C**

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VW New T5 Liberty

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Push button driving



Motoring correspondent Helen Smith took the new Openroad Kangoo Transfer "Drive From" for a test drive, discovering it was a surprisingly secluded vehicle which allows disabled drivers to transfer to the front seat without going outside

It's not often that I actually get to drive any of the vehicles I'm testing, so it made a nice change to be in the driver's seat of Constables Mobility's latest Kangoo.

The Openroad Kangoo Transfer "Drive From" has been designed to enable wheelchair users to wheel themselves into the vehicle and then transfer to a specially adapted seat.

'Because you drive from the car seat and not a wheelchair it's safer'

To get into the Kangoo I was given a small radio controlled handset to hang round my neck. One of the buttons controlled the automatic tailgate and ramp. Once lowered I was able to drive my powered chair in easily.

There is plenty of headroom as the floor has been lowered, and the entry height is 56.5 inches/1,435mm.

The handset can either be charged up by connecting to the cigarette lighter or from a normal indoor power supply.

Once inside I had to transfer to the driver's seat. This seat had several large lever buttons on the left hand side, one of which controlled the seat height.

Once I was in the seat I pressed another button to bring the seat round so I was facing the steering wheel. My legs are quite long and I did have to help them round a bit as I swung around but the seat is nice and easy to control.

The seat has been designed for comfort and will move six different ways to get you in the right position.

This Kangoo was originally designed for manual chairs so if you would want your power chair secured you would need some additional tie downs.

It has a 1.6 petrol engine with automatic transmission. It also comes with metallic paint, electric windows, air conditioning and heated and electrically operated door mirrors as standard features.

Constables Mobility can also install hand controls and the Kangoo I was trying out

out fire in the engine this conversion has also been accredited with low volume type approval, which means the vehicle conversion has been strictly tested. The tyres are also puncture proof.

What I liked about this design was that it allows transferring to be done inside, so if it's raining you won't get wet trying to get into your chair. It also stops onlookers gawping at you as you transfer into your car.

It was reasonably quick to get in and start driving; there wasn't a huge amount of strapping down to be done, and because you drive from the car seat and not a wheelchair it's safer.

The Kangoo is much smaller than some vans but it is still a van. However, if you don't mind this and you are a wheelchair-using driver who finds lifting a wheelchair in to the car difficult, this could be the vehicle for you.

• This Kangoo is available on the Motability scheme or you can buy it from £20,750, tel: 01323 767 574, www.constablesmobility.com



Got a motoring problem?

Watch out for DN's annual motoring supplement in our June issue. The 24-page supplement will be packed with reviews of the latest models and features on the latest motoring issues as well as guides and giveaways to meet all your travel needs.

DN is also looking for any motoring questions you may have, whether on adaptations, finance, learning to drive or parking.

We also want to hear about your motoring solutions, whether it be a car, gadget or great finance deal you have discovered.

Send your questions and suggestions to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk or write to the usual address.

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Sure seating

Lucy Andrews offers ideas to sort out your seating

We spend a good deal of time sitting doing tasks at home and at work. An appropriate chair will promote good posture and help prevent muscle tension and back pain. Some chairs have features suitable for people with additional needs, but these can be expensive. If you need such a chair for work, help may be available through Access to Work. For details contact your local Jobcentre Plus offices or go to www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

FLEXIBLE FIT

What? The Opera 60 office chair is, at the basic level, a standard office chair, but it can have numerous options for people with particular needs. This includes a split seat to accommodate a stiff hip on one side, cushioning made up of blocks of memory foam to fit the size and shape of the user, locks to prevent movement of both the castors and the seat swivel and a powered base so the chair functions as an indoor electric wheelchair. The powered version can include seat elevation to extend reach and powered seat tilt to help the user to stand up from a sitting position.

How much? Basic is £360

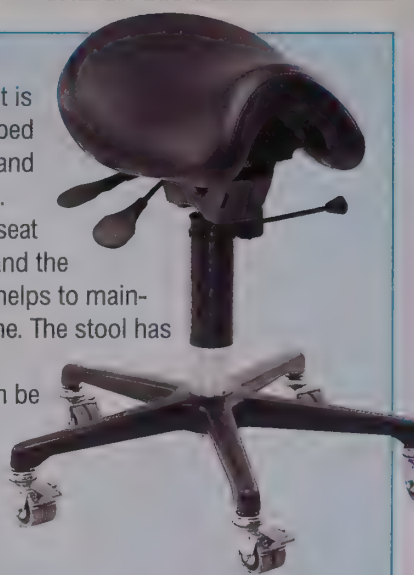
Where? Advanced Seating Designs, tel: 020 8578 4308, www.asd.co.uk

SADDLE SUPPORT

What? The Bambach Saddle Seat is an office stool with a saddle-shaped seat designed to ease back pain and promote a good working posture. The user sits slightly astride the seat so that his or her hips are open and the pelvis is forwards. This position helps to maintain the natural curves of the spine. The stool has a five-star base fitted with either glides or castors. The castors can be locked. An optional backrest gives support when relaxing. The seat adjusts in height and tilt. Four models are available, from child to tall adult.

How much? £599 excluding VAT

Where? Bambach, tel: 0208 532 5100, www.bambach.co.uk



WIRED FOR WHEELS

What? The Vela Work chairs are a range of chairs for use in the kitchen or the office, available as a stool or with a backrest that is shaped to give support whilst keeping shoulders free. They all have large, easy-roll castors with the option of a hand-operated brake to keep the chair still when transferring in and out and a seat swivel that can be locked. Other options include a split seat, forward seat tilt, gas or powered seat height adjustment, armrests, swivel lock and a power drive so that the chair can function as an indoor wheelchair.

How much? From £700

Where? Altonaids Mobility, tel: 0191 491 5840, www.altonaids.co.uk



STRENGTH BUILDER

What? The Pallone chair is a fun seating alternative to help people with back pain. It's basically an inflated ball held steady within a frame. The conforming surface of the ball adjusts with body movement so whilst you are sitting you are actively using your muscles to maintain your balance and stability. Consequently there's a need to slowly build up stamina when using this chair. The ball also helps with pressure distribution making it a more comfortable surface to sit on for people with disc or coccyx pain. The frame adjusts in height and is available with or without castors. A small backrest can be used to relax against if you sit right back on the ball. Child and adult sizes.

How much? £169 with castors, £149 without

Where? Back in Action, tel: 020 7930 8309, www.backinaction.co.uk



BALANCING ACT

What? Kneeling chairs offer an alternative way to sit. The forward sloping seat brings the shoulders over the hips, helping to maintain good posture and opening up the angle between the pelvis and the thighs, giving the user potential to pivot forwards at the hips to reach rather than bending forwards. The user's knees rest on kneepads and his or her feet are tucked back under the hips. There are several styles of kneeling chair available with a static, mobile or rocking base. The Stokke Gravity chair has a rocking base that allows the body to find its natural point of balance. In the forward position it can be used for work, but recline the chair back on its rocking base and you can relax with the knee pad supporting the legs above hip height.

How much? Kneeling chairs can be bought from around £120, Stokke Gravity from £1,209

Where? Putnams, tel: 01752 345 678, www.putnams.com; Stokke UK, tel: 01753 655 873, www.stokke.com



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GOT AN EQUIPMENT QUESTION?

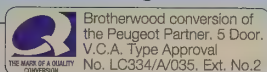
Lucy Andrews is a senior advisor at the Disabled Living Foundation (DLF). If you have a question on equipment for Lucy please email editor@disabilitynow.org.uk or post it to the usual address. The DLF helpline is open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm, and provides information and advice on choosing and using equipment. Contact the helpline on 0845 130 9177 or email: advice@dlf.org.uk

Space Travel



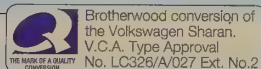
Peugeot Partner

1450mm (57") interior headroom
Converted floor length 1550mm (61")



Volkswagen Sharan

1498mm (59") interior headroom
Converted floor length 1320 (52")

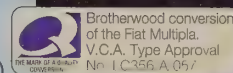


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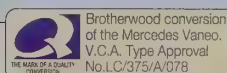
Fiat Multipla

1420mm (56") interior headroom
Converted floor length 1270mm (50")



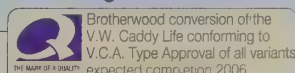
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Volkswagen Caddy Life

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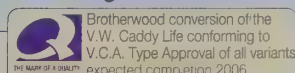
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Motability

Volkswagen Caddy Life
1475mm (58") interior headroom
1450mm (57") lower floor length (50" flat)



Dear Rachel

● love and loneliness ● personal problems ● advice and support

Rachel Wilson, who is disabled herself, has spent many years advising on disability matters. Write to her at *Disability Now*, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW or email your problem to editor@disabilitynow.org.uk



Trading rent for care

I am 65 and my husband, who has Parkinson's disease, is 84. We are looking at the possibility of live-in care, but have very little money. We have had our home extended and the upstairs area is unused. We have thought about offering it rent-free in exchange for care. We currently pay a care agency. What is the best course of action and how would we deal with all the tax issues if we let the upstairs of our house?
Elizabeth, by email

I would treat your care needs and the renting of the upstairs of your home as separate issues.

Your husband's circumstances mean that you should be entitled to care provision. I suggest you contact social services, they may fund your husband's care without you needing to pay agency fees independently.

If you do want to let the upstairs of your house, you need to make sure it has a separate entrance, so the tenant does not need to come through your house.

You should also use a reputable letting agency. They can take responsibility for tax issues and collecting rent.

Depending on how much equity there is in your house, you could consider an equity release scheme, whereby you are able to receive an income based upon your house value, without you having to move.

If you do not have a solicitor I suggest you contact the Disability Law Service before you make any decisions.

● *Disability Law Service*, tel: 020 7791 9800, textphone: 020 7791 9801, www.dls.org.uk

Accessible holiday

I have multiple sclerosis. My husband is my carer but because of surgery he is unable to lift me. We would like to go on a self-catering holiday in accommodation which is accessible for my wheelchair and will accommodate the mobile hoist we need. Do you have any suggestions?
Hazel, Coventry

To ensure that your holiday is as relaxed as possible it is important that you get informed advice. I can suggest three organisations that might be able to help.

The first is the Holiday Care Service. They have information on UK holiday accommodation, which is categorised according to its accessibility. Grade 1 is accessible to a wheelchair user and may be appropriate for using a hoist. If you contact them, they will be able to give you detailed advice.

You could contact the MS Society helpline. They have information on a range of accommodation and can put you in touch with groups who may be able to help you.

And don't forget the holiday directory on the *DN* website which provides information on

accessible holidays and reviews from other disabled people.

I hope you are able to have an enjoyable holiday.

● *Coventry and District MS Society*, tel: 024 76 712 412, www.mssociety.org.uk/branches/west_midlands/coventry

● *MS Society helpline*, tel: 0800 800 8000 (*Freephone*), www.mssociety.org.uk

● *Holiday Care Service*, tel: 08451 249 971, textphone: 08451 249 976, www.holidaycare.org.uk

● www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Just getting by

In 1998 I exchanged a salary, private health insurance and generous pension rights for income support and a carer's allowance.

I look after my wife, who has a neurological condition. Whilst we are grateful for the benefits we receive, there is only just enough to get by.

Our heating and other living costs are rising and there is never enough for a holiday.
Peter, Suffolk

I am terribly sorry to hear of your situation.

I am sure that you have explored all the avenues open to you in terms of your benefit entitlement, but have you tried

contacting your nearest Disability Information and Advice Line (DIAL) service? They can advise on all the options available to you and also support you in making claims.

I also wonder whether you have considered respite care?

This does not suit everyone, but it would give you a break from your caring responsibilities.

You might like to contact your social services department, which may be able to arrange a break of this kind at no cost to yourself.

I understand that contact with social services can be daunting but it might be an option worth considering.

● *DIAL UK*, tel/textphone: 01302 310 123, www.dialuk.info

Benefits in Europe

I am transgendered male to female. I have been living as a woman for eleven months and have had abuse from people. I want to move to Europe, but I receive a number of benefits and have a learning disability, so I want to know what the implications would be.
Alison, by email

I am sorry that you have had such a difficult time.

If you are considering moving to Europe, any benefits will be governed by the country you move to.

These will vary considerably between countries and you need to be sure that you have enough information to make an informed decision.

Because you have been living as a female for a relatively short time, there may be issues involved in getting a new passport. You may need to get detailed advice about this.

I suggest you contact Outsiders, an organisation that advises on all aspects of personal relationships and sexuality for disabled people.

You might also like to contact the advice line of the Beaumont Society, who provide practical advice and support to all transgendered people.

I hope that this is some help and that you are able to find somewhere to live where you feel comfortable.

● *Outsiders Sex and Disability helpline* (open 11am-7pm), tel: 07074 993 527, www.outsiders.org.uk

● *The Beaumont Society*, tel: 01582 412 220, www.beaumontsociety.org.uk

● *Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender support group*, www.galha.org

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Help at the end of the phone

DN's telephone counsellor Lin Berwick gives disabled people and carers advice and support on personal and spiritual problems. Disabled herself, Lin is a psycho-therapeutic counsellor and Methodist local preacher, with a postgraduate diploma in homeopathic medicine. If you have something you need to discuss in confidence, talk to her on Mondays 6pm-10pm and Thursdays 1pm-5pm, tel: 01787 882 111.

ASK THE READERS

I am visually impaired. I use SuperNova and a Magnilink. I have a PA qualification, I just passed a Certificate in Management Studies with distinction and I speak fluent French, but I cannot find a job that will pay me a decent wage. What should I do?

Be persistent

Finding that first job without work experience is hard; you almost have to treat finding employment as a job in itself.

Regularly scour the classified ads and search online employment exchanges.

The Disabled Workers Co-operative* has an ejob portal where employers can advertise vacancies direct to disabled jobseekers.

Apply for as many jobs as you can, and don't be disheartened by rejections.

Make sure your CV is well presented and not too long. This is your chance to make a good impression.

Having got an interview, you could remind your potential employer that new equipment and adaptations can be paid for by grants, which you apply for through your local job centre. Good luck.

*www.disabledworkers.org.uk
Neil Wood-Gaiger

You have an advantage

Look for administration and management jobs in the disability sector. You are less likely to experience discrimination. In fact, your disability will be an advantage, as some organisations run by disabled people will only employ disabled people.

The disability sector is always looking for talented disabled people.

Don't think that working in the disability sector is a cop out, as it's not – it's challenging, interesting and never boring!
Victoria Lucas

Get practical help

Employment Solutions provide free support and advice in finding work in the South/South West/North East and South East.

Finding work can be hard, especially if you've been out of the workplace for some time.

There's no denying that some employers have unwarranted

perceptions of the issues around employing disabled people.

Employment Solutions work on behalf of clients to challenge these perceptions and can provide advice to employers about the legal obligations of employing a diverse workforce.

Ensure that your CV includes transferable skills relevant to the job you're applying for. These are the skills we use in many different situations and carry around from task to task without even realising it.

Organisation skills may have come from having to manage complicated health needs such as diet or medication. Try to think about your lifestyle and the skills you use every day and give examples where possible to back up your claims.

Prepare for your interview, ensure you arrive on time, know who you are going to see, take a copy of your application with you, relax and smile.

Suzanne Smith



MAGNILINK S SERIES M15 STUDENT. SIGHT AND SOUND TECHNOLOGY

Market your abilities

Language skills are always marketable and coupled with your skills as a PA you have a number of things in your favour.

You do not say how proficient you are in reading French, but it would be worth contacting any organisations that offer translation services.

If you are having difficulty finding permanent work, you might try registering with temping agencies; the increase in pan-European commerce and the need for language skills would be to your advantage.

The fact that you use specialist equipment must not be used to discriminate against you.

You might also like to contact the organisation Blind in Business* which supports visually impaired people in training and employment.

In the event that they cannot help you directly, they will be able to advise on the most appropriate way forward, given

your particular circumstances.

* *Blind in Business*, tel:

020 7588 1885

Rachel Wilson

Professional support

You should contact your nearest Jobcentre Plus office and ask to speak to an Access to Work advisor or a disability employment advisor.

The Access to Work scheme* provides practical advice to help people overcome work-related obstacles resulting from disability and also grants towards extra costs, including equipment, adaptations to premises and help with travel to work. Hope this helps.

* <http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople/AccessToWork/>
Jim, South Cumbria

NEXT MONTH'S QUESTION:

"Does anyone know of a quality dating website that has an understanding of disabled people's needs? I have visited the usual sites – dateline.co.uk and match.com – but have had no luck. Does anyone know a website or group that could help me meet someone?"

Andy

Send your answers and your own questions to "Ask the readers" at the usual address or email: editor@disabilitynow.org.uk

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What's On

The RNID is encouraging people to have a telephone hearing check on 3 May (tel: 0845 600 55 55), as part of Deaf Awareness Week, which runs from 1-7 May. Tel: 0808 808 0123, textphone: 0808 808 9000, www.rnid.org.uk

The London Sports Forum for Disabled People (LSF) is holding a one-day conference on widening access to football opportunities for disabled people in London on 5 May. The event will include speakers, information on national and regional initiatives and workshops. SCORE, Leyton. £12, including lunch. Tel: 020 7354 8666, email: info@london.sportsforum.org.uk

The Culag Community Woodland Trust is holding a series of guided walks on the Little Assynt Estate near Lochinver from 5-9 May, following the opening of an accessible path. Tel: 01571 844 368, www.culagwoods.org.uk

Focusability Wakefield is holding a disability awareness day on 6 May in Pontefract. The day will include advice and information, art and craft workshops and refreshments. Free. The Grove, Stockingate, South Kirkby. Tel: 01924 899 642, email: vcgjubilee@yahoo.com

The Scuba Trust is celebrating ten years of helping disabled people to scuba dive with an open day on 7 May in Alton, Hampshire. There will be free 'try dive' sessions. These sessions are also regularly held, along with scuba diving holidays and events. Lord Mayor Treloar National Specialist College, Holybourne. Tel: 07985 025 386, www.scubatrust.org.uk

A **Valuing People** conference on best practice in employment for people with learning difficulties will be held on 10 May at the Holiday Inn in Bloomsbury, London. The event will include a keynote address from Anne McGuire, minister for disabled people, and workshops. Tel: 01273 441 676, email: geoff@centrevvents.co.uk

Disabled Living Manchester is holding an information day on telecare and assistive technology in the 21st century on 10 May in Manchester. £5, including lunch. Tel: 0870 777 4714, www.disabledliving.co.uk

Ceretas is holding its annual home care conference on 10 May in Blackfriars, London. Subjects covered include the white paper on adult social care and the future of home care. Tel: 0115 983 8991, www.ceretas.org.uk

The National Autistic Society (NAS) is holding a range of conferences and seminars over the coming months, including a 3-day introduction to TEACCH from 10-12 May and a seminar titled *Structured Teaching in the Home* on 13 May, both in Glasgow, and a seminar titled *Autistic Spectrum Disorders and Sexuality* on 23 May in London. From £47. Tel: 0115 911 3367, www.autism.org.uk/conferences

The National Centre for Young People with Epilepsy (NCYPE) is holding a one-day event titled *Managing Epilepsy* on 11 May in Lingfield, Surrey. There will be presentations and information on managing epilepsy in children and young people. Tel: 01342 831 238, www.ncype.org.uk

The National Association for Bikers with a Disability (NABD) is holding an event titled *You've Been Nabbed* from 12-14 May at Astle Park, Chelford, Cheshire. The event will include bands, comedy, magicians, children's entertainment and a bike show. From £14. Tel: 0870 759 0603, www.nabd.org.uk

The State of London Debate will be held at the Queen Elizabeth 11 Conference Centre in Westminster on 13

May. This is a chance to have your say and put your questions to Mayor of London Ken Livingstone on key issues affecting Londoners. Topics to be covered include the Paralympics and Olympics and transport. Free registration. See www.london.gov.uk/stateoflondon. Material available in alternative formats.

Voice UK is holding a conference titled *The Beginning, the Middle and the End*, focusing on the criminal justice process and vulnerable victims and witnesses, on 15 May at the University of Derby. The keynote speaker is Fiona Mactaggart MP. From £90. Tel: 01332 295 775, www.voiceuk.org.uk

AbilityFest will be at the Strathclyde Suite of Glasgow Royal Concert Hall on 18 May. The event will give information and advice on employment and training opportunities. There will be interactive sessions, exhibitors and art and music workshops. Free. Tel: 0141 649 1521, www.abilityfest.org.uk

The North York Moors National Park is holding a celebration event in Dalby Forest on 20 May to mark the success of an 'access for all'

project. The event will include music, food, a sensory trail with talking posts and an accessible trail around Staindale Lake. There are new accessible routes and improved access to the network. A booklet titled *Easy Going North York Moors*, is available at £4.50 from the website. To pre-register for the event, tel: 01439 770 657, www.moors.uk.net

SpecialneedsIT will be at the Reebok Stadium in Bolton on 22-23 May. The event will include information on communication aids and software. There will also be seminars. Free. See www.inclusive.co.uk/exhibitions

Children's charity **Kids** is holding a series of regional network meetings focusing on inclusion this summer around the UK, including Calderdale in the Yorks and Humber region on 25 May. Free. Tel: 020 7359 3073, email: network.coordinator@kids.org.uk

Motorsport Endeavour is holding a two-day rallying experience with Endeavour Northamptonshire on 27-28 May. £150 for team of two, includes lunch, rally plates, clothing, road book and a prize-giving dinner. Tel: 07971 641 872, www.motorsportendeavour.com

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Sports

Chelsea Football Club has changed its policy for its disabled supporters. From the start of the 2006/7 season, all disabled fans and their carers can get match tickets at Stamford Bridge for free. Tel: 0870 300 2322, www.chelseafc.com

Courses

The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF) has a range of courses, with topics including moving and handling and housing adaptations, throughout May. Tel: 020 7289 6111, www.dlf.org.uk/training

Enable Solutions UK have launched *The Unique! Programme*, a series of activities aimed at educating young people in disability equality and diversity. Free. Available in various formats. See www.enable-online.co.uk

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Publications

Disabled Children and the Law by Janet Read, Luke Clements and David Ruebain, has been published in an updated second edition. *Jessica Kingsley Publishers*, £19.99.

The British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) has a range of publications, including *Life story books for people with learning disabilities: A practical guide*, by Helen Hewitt. The guide gives information on creating a life story book. £16. Tel: 08702 402 182, email: orders@booksource.net, www.bild.org.uk

Centro has published the 2006 edition of *Getting Around*, a guide to accessible transport in the West Midlands. Available in various formats. Free. Tel: 0121 214 7214, www.centro.org.uk

The Good Schools Guide – Special Educational Needs gives information on schools and SEN. Central Books, £22.95. See www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk

Children with Seizures: A Guide for Parents, Teachers and Other Professionals gives information on seizures, including terminology and medication. *Jessica Kingsley*, £11.99. See www.jkp.com

The Children's Society has launched a pack titled *Ask Us about Direct Payments*, a guide for young people on accessing services. The guide includes a booklet and CD Rom. £15. Tel: 020 7841 4401, www.childrenssociety.org.uk/shop

RADAR has published *The National Key Scheme Guide 2006*, giving information on accessible toilets around the UK. £10.20. Tel: 020 7250 3222, www.radar.org.uk

The British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) has published a leaflet titled *Get wise – how to make sure your wheelchair remains stable*, giving BHTA guidelines on wheelchair stability. For a copy, send an

A5 SAE to BHTA, Suite 4.06, New Loom House, Back Church Lane, London, E1 1LU. Tel: 020 7702 2141, www.bhta.com

Special Abilities have launched three new information manuals, on adults with disabilities, children and young people with disabilities, and special educational needs. From £6 each. Tel: 01924 385 977, email: special@abilities.fsnet.co.uk

The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health has a range of publications on mental health, including psychiatric care, managing mental health problems, inclusion and employment. From £5. Tel: 020 7827 8352, www.scmh.org.uk

Souvenir Press has published a range of titles in its *Human Horizons* series, with topics including Down's syndrome, dyslexia and sign language. Tel: 020 7580 9307, email: souvenirpress@ukonline.co.uk

Websites

RADAR and the **National Key Scheme (NKS)** have made over 7,000 toilets around the UK accessible. Details of these are now available online. See www.directenquiries.com

Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea have launched a

new website, offering information and opinion on disability issues. They have also produced a report titled *Inclusive Kensington and Chelsea*, looking at access throughout the borough. See www.adkc.org.uk

The Usability Exchange website allows disabled people to test websites and give feedback to website developers on the accessibility and usability of their websites. Free registration. See www.usabilityexchange.com

Appointments

Tara Flood, former head of policy and politics at Scope, becomes director of the Alliance for Inclusive Education.

Have a look at our website for the latest news, features, campaign updates, sports and arts. There are also sections on motoring, travel and equipment. Get involved in our forums and Have Your Say sections. Check out the For Sale section for used wheelchairs, scooters and cars – many pictured – and our extensive online holiday directory, again with pictures. You can also find a penpal, register for our monthly email newsletter and enter exclusive online competitions. See www.disabilitynow.org.uk

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Services

Cancerbackup has launched audiotapes and a public touch-screen providing information on cancer. Free. Freephone information service, tel: 0808 800 1234, www.cancerbackup.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support is touring the UK with its Mobile Macmillan Cancer Information Centre, giving advice, information and support on local high streets. Tel (freephone): 0808 808 2020, www.macmillan.org.uk/mobile

The Centre for Accessible Environments (CAE) has launched an access and sustainability advisory service, in association with the Bridge House Trust, to advise voluntary and community groups in London on making their premises more accessible. Tel: 020 7840 5816, www.cae.org.uk

Enfield's Crisis Resolution and Home Treatment Service, which helps people with mental health problems and supports people needing psychiatric care in their homes, is now available 24 hours a day. Tel: 020 8375 1122, www.enfield.gov.uk

REMIDI provides identity tags to enable people with conditions such as diabetes and epilepsy to receive instant and accurate treatment and have family and doctors notified easily. Ten personalised tags, ten identification markers and a car sticker are available for £12.50. See www.remidi.org

Wanted

The Electoral Commission is inviting applications for grants to encourage more involvement in democracy, including projects that encourage participation from disabled people. Tel: 0207 271 0561, www.electoralcommission.org.uk/partnership

Barclays is looking for nominations for the Trading Places awards, which reward people who have overcome adversity to set up a small business. Deadline: 26 May. Tel: 020 8673 2020, www.barclays.co.uk/tradingplaces

The Wheelyboat Trust is inviting entries for the Alan Faulkner Memorial Award 2006, which is presented to the game fishery that provides disabled anglers with the best accessible service. Deadline: 7 July. Tel: 01798 342 222, www.wheelyboats.org

Sense, which works with deafblind people, is looking for volunteers to accompany deafblind people around the UK. Tel/textphone: 020 7561 3306, www.sense.org.uk/holidays



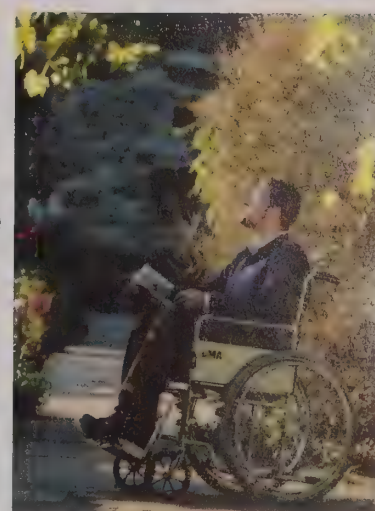
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Volkswagen Shuttle Diesel 1.9, Mileage: 2,316. Registered: Nov 05, Colour: Silver, Access Rear Lift, Seats: 3 Manual. Short wheelbase, PAS and Electric mirrors. **£18,450**

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2 newly converted barns on small family farm. Fully wheelchair accessible. Ensuite bedrooms. Sleeps up to 6. For details contact Esme Eyles 01726 883240 or www.treworgansfarm.co.uk

Pembrokeshire, Marloes. 2 bedroomed self-catering holiday cottage, suitable for people with disabilities. Within the Pembrokeshire Coast National park with its stunning landscape of sandy beaches and rolling countryside. Wide doors, level access, wet floor walk-in shower area. Contact: Kevin Launders mobile: 0781336956; email: kevinlaunders@yahoo.co.uk; website tygwincottage.co.uk

**Disabled Access
Holidays****Puerto Pollensa - Majorca**

**2 and 3 Bedroom
Wheelchair Accessible Apartments**

Built with extra wide doors and turning circles for easy access by wheelchair.

**Molift Hoist, Shower Chair
& Changing Table available**

**Airport Transfers
via Wheelchair Adapted Vehicle.**

Tel: 0141 270 7577www.dah-europe.com• **Recruitment (on page 46 to 50)****From cripple to
award-winning
TV Producer in
30 years.****Project Manager –
Production Trainee Scheme**

London • Three days per week • Nine-month contract initially

The words people use have changed over the past few decades. As have attitudes – to a point. But there's still a way to go, otherwise there'd be more disabled people working in TV. Now we're doing something about it. Or rather, you are. Because you're going to set up and run every aspect of this brand new project – from establishing partnerships with production companies to recruiting trainees and managing their six-month experience of TV production. We're committed to this. But we need you to make it work and help source its continued funding. Project management experience in a media environment is essential.

To find out more and apply online, visit www.channel4.com/4careers

Closing date: 15 May 2006.

Our commitment to diversity doesn't end with our programming.

**Bloomberg****JOIN THE
TEAM**

Bloomberg has amazing entry level career opportunities for you in finance, economics, IT and providing support for the **BLOOMBERG PROFESSIONAL** service, the tool that changed the financial services industry. Gain full training in the markets and our products. Then join a team that works closely with more than 250,000 financial professionals who trust us to help them move billions of dollars every day.

To join the team, apply today at
careers.bloomberg.com.

DEADLINE

DN Extra May 2006 published 13 May. Classified deadlines: Booking and copy: 3 May.

Disability Now June 2006 published 27 May. Classified deadlines:

Booking: 12 May. Copy: 16 May.

• Recruitment (on page 46 to 50)

Support for disabled people

If you have a disability or health condition that affects your chances of finding or keeping a job, ask to see a Disability Employment Adviser, based in your local Jobcentre Plus office or Jobcentre.

They can provide:

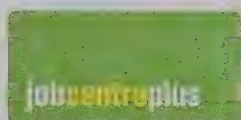
- help with finding and keeping a job
- support with benefit entitlement and programmes like New Deal, and
- advice to employers on employing disabled people.



Find out what additional help you can get by visiting our website:

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Jobseeker Direct: 0845 6060 234
Textphone: 0845 6055 255



Including Jobcentres and social security offices

• Holidays (Cont'd)

Norfolk, Nar Valley Holiday Cottages

3 self-catering, all wheelchair accessible, 1 with wheel-in shower room, 2 with airbaths. Mostly en-suite. Electric bed. On working farm – peaceful location, central for beaches and tourist attractions. Indoor heated swimming pool.

More details and prices, contact: Rosemary on 01760 338797.

Cotswold Charm

Self-catering cottages at Top Farm in Chipping Campden

Tranquil hamlet of Westington 600 yards from historic curved High Street.

4 cottages, ensuite, sleep 3-6 each.

Rick Cottage (6) – wheelchair access ground floor kitchen with adjust height table, etc., ensuite bed, lounge & conservatory. Hoist hire & specialist care, etc. available via links on our website

Web: www.cotswoldcharm.co.uk

Call Michael on 01386 840164. Fax: 01386 841883. Email: cotswoldcharm@fsmail.net

10 MINUTES FROM DISNEYLAND

Florida villa owned by paraplegic. Sleeps up to 12, fully accessible and large.

King size bed with ensuite bathroom, wc and wheel-in shower. Large pool with water operated seat for a disabled person. A holiday you can take with confidence. Contact John Gillett on: 01805 601147.

Central Devon: 3 comfortable ground floor manor farmhouse apartments, M2 wheelchair accessible. Picturesque, peaceful situation, on-site coarse fishing.

Half mile Crediton, 8 miles Exeter. No smoking/pets. Ideal holiday base. X X X Graded.

Tel: 01363 772684,
www.creedymenor.com

Self-Catering Apartments in Brittany, France

Four brand new 2 bed luxury apartments in La Roche Derrien, in a converted cotton mill on the banks of the River Jaudy. Purpose built for accessibility, all with level access showers. www.ineedaholidaytoo.com
0800 949 6801 or +33 (0)2 96 91 55 97

• Accommodation

- Searching for accessible or adapted property?
 - Accessible or adapted property to sell or let?
 - Looking for an approved estate agent?
- The Accessible Property Register
web: www.accessible-property.org.uk
Tel: 0114 2307058

• Public appointments

Help us Banish Disablism Become a Trustee of Scope

Scope is a national disability organisation whose focus is people with cerebral palsy. Our mission is to drive the change to make our society the first where disabled people achieve full equality. We campaign to banish disablism and we deliver a wide range of services to support disabled people and their families in achieving choice and control over their lives.

Our Executive Council comprises both elected and co-opted Trustees, and we are now co-opting a further five Trustees. Trustees have full accountability for the strategic direction of Scope, ensuring that the charity achieves its mission. Scope has a turnover of £100m, and has over 3,500 staff and 10,000 volunteers throughout England and Wales.

We are particularly interested in people with knowledge and skills in:

- Strategic & business finance
- Management of risk and financial audit
- Experience of disability rights campaigning
- Issues relating to black and minority ethnic communities
- Commissioning and delivering large scale public-sector services
- Marketing and business development

scope

About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

disā'blism/n. discriminatory, oppressive or abusive behaviour arising from the belief that disabled people are inferior to others.

These posts are not specifically reserved for disabled people, but we would be very keen to hear from disabled people or parents of disabled people who are able to bring this invaluable lived experience in addition to the particular skills and knowledge listed.

If you are interested in disabled people achieving full equality please visit www.scope.org.uk. To apply, please send a cv and supporting letter to Sue Bell, Secretary to the Board, Scope, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW before 19th May 2006.

Email: sue.bell@scope.org.uk
or call her on 020 7619 7171 for an informal discussion.
www.scope.org.uk

Scope is a Registered Charity.



Time to get equal

• Services

BIRKDALE PAEDIATRIC & ADULT NEURO CLINIC

Advice and treatment from newborn babies to adults. A wide range of conditions treated, some of these include movement, posture, balance, walking, coordination, hand-function and learning difficulties. Specialise in cerebral palsy and neurological conditions. Farshideh Bondarenko DIP PHYSIO MCSP SRP.

web: www.neuro-physio.co.uk tel: 0208 998 9403

New look and new products

Enable Select is a leading online disability shop offering products which can not be found elsewhere. From adult bibs and feeding aprons with sleeves to swimming jackets, hats and verruca socks.

Now includes swimming nappies and plastic pants for all ages.

PLUS *NOW* 10% DISCOUNT FOR ALL DN READERS

Website: www.enableselect.com Email: select@enableenterprises.com

Tel: 0800 358 8484 **Meeting the needs of your disability NOW!**

©2006 Enable Enterprises



CONDITIONS

Disability Now maintains the right to amend or withdraw lineage adverts without prior notice. All adverts must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice.

Telephone numbers and addresses will not be placed in personal adverts, for confidentiality. Instead, Box numbers will be provided. Likewise, telephone numbers and addresses will not be given out over the telephone if requested.

Box Numbers can be requested for non-personal adverts. However, it may limit the response to it. If you want to advertise documents, goods or services contact Patrick Durham-Matthews tel: 020 7619 7320, fax: 020 7619 7331.

Lineage adverts can only be used by private individuals. All commercial enquiries must be addressed to Richard Gresham (see contact details above).

DN cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage of adverts or letters during forwarding. It is the responsibility of the advertiser to check the content of their advert, and to ensure any abbreviations cannot be misunderstood.

• Courses

The Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries

THE SKILLSET OPEN DOOR AWARDS

Want to get into the media industry and don't know how**Do you want to make a short film, produce a radio programme or design and build your own website?****Let Skillset open the door for you!**

The Skillset Open Door Awards may be just what you need. It offers a **passport of media skills training** which include industry led master classes, BBC skills training, professional mentoring and careers guidance, an industry work experience placement, networking opportunities and much more.

We are currently seeking applications from talented people from across London's ethnic minority communities who have gained some media experience and want to make that next professional step up the industry career ladder.

The Skillset Open Door Awards scheme is **FREE**, all we require is your talent. It will run from June 2006 to January 2007.

If you are over 18 years old, have a story to tell and believe that you can benefit from a Skillset Open Door Award, prove it by submitting an application to us.

You can contact us at www.skillset.org/opendoorawards

Or alternatively, contact the Open Door Awards Team on 0207 520 5498.

The deadline for applications is 5pm, Monday 15th May 2006.

skills
FOR BUSINESS

BBC

LOND
DEVELOPMENT
AGENCY

EUROPEAN UNION



PERSONAL ADS

For personal ads, submit about 25 words and send a cheque or postal order for £10 payable to **Disability Now** with your ad. This is to help cover our costs.

• Courses

Centre for Disability Studies School of Sociology and Social Policy University of Leeds

New Diplomas and MAs in Disability Studies



In addition to our established Diploma/MA in Disability Studies programmes, the Centre of Disability Studies now offers five new taught post graduate courses in Disability and related fields. These include Disability and Gender, Disability and Health, Disability and Race and Ethnicity, Disability and Social Policy, and Disability and Special Educational Needs. These dedicated schemes give students the opportunity to apply a disability studies perspective to particular areas of social policy and support. All our Disability Studies courses are designed for people working in or planning a career in the general area of disability research and related services.

Candidates will normally have a first degree or equivalent professional qualification, **but relevant experience will be taken into account where appropriate.** This course is taught in an accessible location and the University welcomes disabled students.

Note: only the Post Graduate Diploma/MA in Disability Studies scheme is available as an open distance learning package.

For further details please contact **MARIE ROSS** or **DEBBIE WESTMORELAND** in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds, LST 9JT.

Tel: and Minicom 0113 343 4408 or 0113 343 4407

• Recruitment (on page 46 to 50)

SOUTH YORKSHIRE
PASSENGER TRANSPORT

EXECUTIVE

COMMITTED TO EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT

Working in partnership with the four South Yorkshire District Councils of Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield, local public transport operators and many South Yorkshire organisations, the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive is responsible for securing and promoting the best possible public transport network for the South Yorkshire community.

Through our commitment to providing equal opportunities we intend to be an organisation that embraces and encourages diversity and is positive about employing disabled people.

All vacancies are advertised on our website at: www.sypte.co.uk and within local newspapers, alternatively you can call the Human Resources Department on 0114 2211218 for information.

Benefits include a flexible working hours scheme, 26 days holiday per year, a company final salary based pension scheme and a free countywide TravelMaster providing unlimited bus, tram and rail travel throughout South Yorkshire.



Awarded for excellence



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Centre of Excellence
Employment Planning

The Transport Executive is striving to become an exemplar Equality and Diversity Employer

SEND US YOUR SMALLS...

...and make a big impression. Small ads in DN reach over 60,000 people for just £9 a line. All small ads must be paid for in advance. If you want to advertise, please use the form provided. Send it with a cheque for the total to Disability Now, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

• Recruitment (on page 46 to 50)

Leonard Cheshire is the UK's leading provider of disability support services, and campaigns on the rights of disabled people.

Since 1996, Leonard Cheshire has been working in partnership with Derbyshire County Council to provide a range of community and centre-based day services across this large county. With a new contract now in place, we are committed to delivering a wholly community-based service within the next 5 years.

User Involvement Worker

£21,000 p.a. pro rata (pay award pending)

21 hrs p.w.

Are you ready to make a real difference? Can you help us make this vision a reality? We are seeking an innovative and enthusiastic disabled person to lead the development of a countywide representative forum to ensure users of the Derbyshire Community Support Service are formally involved in the running, planning and monitoring of the service. Working alongside local managers on the Derbyshire contract, you will be managed as part of a national team of disabled workers supporting service user empowerment across the organisation. A commitment to the Social Model of Disability is essential, as is experience of facilitating groups of disabled people in various environments. Working from home, or from our office in Alfreton, there will be a need for extensive travel within Derbyshire and occasionally further a field.

Application packs are available from Joanne Goodison, Cressy Fields Resource Centre, Cressy Road, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 7BR. T: 01773 830764. F: 01773 830784. E: joanne.goodison@lc-uk.org
Closing date: 15 May 2006. www.leonard-cheshire.org.uk

We welcome applications from disabled people. All vacancies are subject to standard or enhanced disclosure.



Creating opportunities with disabled people
LEONARD CHESHIRE

Scope for you to transform Independent Living

Scope's mission is to drive the change to make our society the first where disabled people achieve equality. For this to happen, people with cerebral palsy have to have the choice and control over their own lives enabling independent living to become a reality and a way of life.

Scope is at the forefront of this move to independent living and is in a unique position to make these changes a reality. The following business development position reports to the Director of Independent Living and is vital to achieving our goals.

Head of Service Transformation circa £55k

This post is reserved for a disabled person

In this role you will take overall responsibility for transforming Scope's independent living services to enable disabled people to exercise choice and control over their lives. Working to a planned schedule, you will identify a range of suitable independent living options that meet Scope's strategic aims and represent the views of service users, including those with additional support needs and other key stakeholders. A skilled communicator with excellent influencing and negotiating skills, you will have already proven yourself in a similar role demonstrating effective experience of Community Living Schemes and special needs housing provision.

We believe that by valuing our people and providing career development opportunities we will achieve our aims. This position can be based from home.
For an application form please contact Martin Hooper, Administration and Recruitment Manager, Scope, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.
Email: martin.hooper@scope.org.uk
Tel: 020 7619 7369.
Minicom: 020 7619 7137.

This is a re-advertisement and previous applicants need not apply.
Closing date: Friday 12 May 2006.
Preliminary interviews will be held on 25th May 2006.
We are committed to equal opportunities.

scope

About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

Time to get equal



Scope is a Registered Charity.

Make your next role as important as ours.

DFID, the Department for International Development: leading the British government's fight against world poverty.

We offer opportunities in our headquarters in London and East Kilbride – but also in many developing countries, with staff based in DFID offices plus British Embassies and High Commissions around the world. We have roles for leaders; professionals; specialists; managers; graduates and administrators.

DFID is an equal opportunities employer and selection is on merit. Applications are welcomed from all parts of the community and we actively encourage interest from women, ethnic minority groups and those with a disability. We will make any reasonable adjustments should they be required. Candidates should be UK Nationals, nationals of a member state of the European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth citizens with the right to work in the UK.

You can find out more about us, and our work, on our website www.dfid.gov.uk. You'll also find information about specific vacancies, opportunities, and an electronic application on the site.



DFID

Department for
International
Development

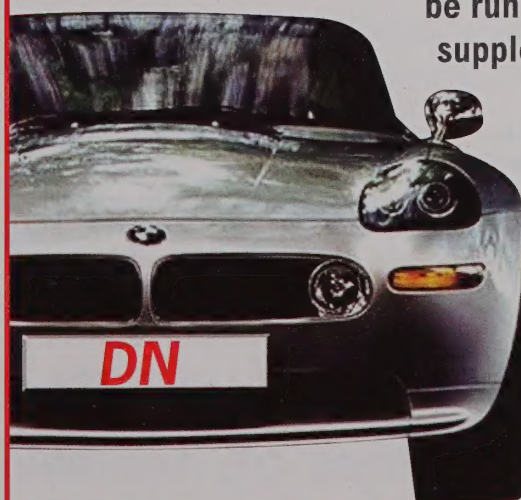
www.dfid.gov.uk

MOBILITY ROADSHOW

To coincide with the Mobility Roadshow in Kemble Disability Now will be running a 24-page, full-colour, motoring supplement in the June issue. It will be full of information and experiences of disabled drivers and their families.

To advertise contact Richard Gresham on 020 7619 7336, email: richard.gresham@scope.org.uk

Book all adverts
by 9th May.



QUICKIE F75 OUTDOOR/indoor electric wheelchair with charger. Fully adjustable seating, arm rests and foot plates. Puncture proof tyres, headlights and indicators. Max speed 4 mph, max range approx 15 miles on full charge. With kerb climber (max height 5") and right hand control box. Only used half a dozen times and in immaculate condition. With user manual, asking only £1,900 ono. Tel: 020 7359 1442 (N. London) or mobile: 07951 534 715.

BALDER F280 POWERCHAIR (never used) – Great for indoors & out – designed for independence without compromise. Electric: height-adjustable & 'Tilt in Space' seat, reclining backrest, elevating leg rest with height-adjustable footrests, seat belt, headrest. Automatic vehicle clamping system. Dx-Dynamic Control System. Front and rear lights. Has many uses, including forming a bed if necessary. Original price £22,000, yours for £9,950 ono. Tel: 020 8391 4294.

• Household & Families

BATH KNIGHT ELECTRIC Lowering and lifting aid, dual control, compact and dismantled for easy transportation. In excellent condition, £300 ono. Tel: 01983 759648.

BATH BUDDY. INFLATABLE bath seat, only used once, perfect condition. £399. Tel: 01235-528804 (Nr Oxford).

• Property for sale

GROUND FLOOR FLAT in Edinburgh, fully wheelchair accessible, 2 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms (1 ensuite). Wooden floor and wonderfully bright. Newly built in a particularly friendly community with shared green spaces and local amenities through being near town centre. Regular bus routes nearby, railway station 2 miles away and residential parking. £205,000 ono. Viewing can be arranged anytime. Tel: 07775 703665.

WELLS, SOMERSET – FULLY wheelchair accessible two-bedroom bungalow in quiet residential area close to open country. Large master bedroom with ensuite level access shower. Second bedroom and family bathroom. Lounge/diner, fitted kitchen. Widened doorways. Garage, parking, patio and wheelchair accessible garden. £175,000. Tel: 01749 676540 www.accessible-property

Linage is
updated everyday:
www.disabilitynow.org.uk

Fundraising With A Mission

Corporate Partnerships Executive

£23,959 - £28,592 - London N7

This post is reserved for a disabled person

Scope is a national disability organisation whose focus is people with cerebral palsy. Our mission is to drive the change to make our society the first where disabled people achieve full equality. We campaign to banish disablism and we deliver a wide range of services to support disabled people and their families in achieving choice and control over their lives.

Fundamental to realising our ambitions is developing major long-term relationships with corporate supporters and working with them on high profile initiatives. Joining a team of experienced and ambitious fundraisers, you will play an important part in developing fresh and creative approaches to secure these high level partnerships.

With a proven track record of success in a fundraising, marketing or sales environment, you will use your excellent

negotiation and communication skills to both win and build our corporate supporter base.

We believe that by valuing our people and providing career development opportunities we will achieve our aims. For an application form please contact Marianne San Miguel, Scope, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW.

Email: marianne.sanmiguel@scope.org.uk

Tel: 020 7619 7306

Minicom: 020 7619 7137

Closing date: 8 May 2006

We are committed to equal opportunities.

www.scope.org.uk



About cerebral palsy.
For disabled people achieving equality.

Time to get equal

Scope is a Registered Charity



COMMISSION FOR EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS JUSTICE, EQUALITY & FAIRNESS...

Chair • Salary - highly competitive

Commissioners • Attractive remuneration plus expenses

The establishment of the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR) is a major step towards the Government's vision of a diverse, fairer and more prosperous Britain. The CEHR will be based on three core pillars - equality, human rights and good relations, working towards fairness throughout our society by removing unfair barriers and extending opportunities to all. Its extensive powers and duties will allow it to tackle discrimination in society, champion diversity, and promote equality and human rights principles and practice in public and private bodies.

As Chair, you will relish the challenge of developing a vision for and leading a new organisation that will break new ground by working to ensure that all citizens can enjoy freedom from prejudice and discrimination and participate fully in our richly diverse society. With a private, public or voluntary/charitable sector background, you already have a high profile role, with a track record of success in leading, listening to and influencing a wide range of stakeholders, and are committed to making a difference through championing the principles of equality and fairness.

As one of a team of up to 14 other Commissioners, including specific Commissioners for Scotland and for Wales and a Commissioner who is or has been a disabled person, you will work to form a collegiate and highly effective board. Whatever your background, interest or area of advocacy you will be passionate about fostering and promoting the entire work of the new Commission, and be committed to delivering successful outcomes.


The newly appointed board will also play a key role in the subsequent appointment of a Chief Executive for the CEHR.

For more information and to apply online, visit **www.cehrappointments.co.uk** or for a hard copy pack, Braille or audio versions call **020 7025 3538** or Textphone **020 7017 0996** quoting reference CEHR001.

For an informal and confidential discussion about either the role of Chair or Commissioners call our advisors Shahidul Miah on **020 7017 0912**, James Greengrass on **020 7017 0931**, David Schwartz on **020 7017 0932** or Hamish Davidson **020 7017 0905**.

Closing date for applications: Chair 15 May 2006 / Commissioners 10 July 2006.

The government is committed to providing equal opportunities for all, irrespective of age, disability, gender, marital status, race, religion & belief, sexual orientation, transgender and working patterns and to the principle of public appointments based on merit with independent assessments, openness and transparency of process.

 HM Government



Caxton House, 2 Farringdon Road
London EC1M 3HN
www.rockpools.co.uk
Member of the Pinnacle Public Services Group

rockpools
NATURALLY DIFFERENT

ROYAL INTERNATIONAL AIR TATTOO



The Royal International Air Tattoo, one of the world's leading international airshows, will take place at RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire between 15 and 16 July. RAF Charitable Trust Enterprises are giving away ten pairs of tickets, worth over £60 per pair.

The airshow will feature more than 300 aircraft, including the aerobatic formations of the famous Red Arrows, classic warbirds and the Eurofighter Typhoon – the latest addition to the RAF's fighter force. Other highlights include the first UK flying display of the V-22 Osprey tiltrotor and the state-of-the-art Spanish Eurofighter.

On the ground, visitors will have the chance to view aircraft, meet *Top Gun* pilots, fly their own jets in flight simulators, sit in a Formula One racing car and try out supercharged racing karts. On both days the flying display will be followed by a free outdoor evening concert featuring jazz star Claire Teal and the BBC Big Band.

For your chance to win a pair of tickets, tick 'Tattoo' on the entry form.

Children aged 16 and under go free. For more information, tel: 0870 758 1918, www.airtattoo.com



DN next month

All the best news, views, jobs and offers. On sale 27 May



GET IN GEAR

Our annual motoring supplement takes over *DN*, bringing all you need to know about the latest hot topics for disabled drivers, including the future of the

new motorists' organisation Mobilise – which has already lost its first chief executive – a guide to buying second hand vehicles and an update on blue badge issues. *DN* will also help you get out and about with travel diaries, car reviews and equipment guides and giveaways.

The Get in Gear supplement will be given out at the *DN* stand at the Mobility Roadshow – (June 8-10) – which this year moves to Swindon.

LAST MONTH'S WINNERS

The winners of the FlipKlip book holder in the March issue were: S.Underwood from East Sussex, A.Bamber from Birmingham, B.Cunningham from Solihull, J.Tucker from Somerset, M.Boyle from West Sussex, C.Bartholomew from Aylesbury, Claire Rabbetts from Newcastle, H.C.Ingham from Plymouth, L.H.Phillips from Stanmore and M.Gillett from Brighton. The winners of the Thermoskin gloves were: J.Ellwood from Scarborough, D.Richardson from Devon, H.Quiller from Sutton Coldfield, P.Mortby from Sheffield and F.Hughes from Holywell. The winner of the Rainbow Sound Block toy was L.Marrow from Hull.

to enter

Tick the competition circle below, add your details, and send for FREE to *Disability Now*, Freepost WD4323, London N7 9BR, or you can fax it on 020 7619 7331, or email the details to: fiona.mitchell@scope.org.uk

Tattoo ☐

Crocs ☐



terms & conditions

Closing date for entrants: 19.05.06 • Entrants must be over 18 • No proof of purchase required • UK entrants only • No cash alternatives • Winners notified by post • Editor's decision is final • Special offers not open to *DN* staff or associates • Winners may be announced in *DN* • In association with RAF Charitable Trust Enterprises and lookatmycrazyshoes.com. We may use your name and address for further marketing purposes. Please tick the box if you do not wish your details to be included ☐

CROCS SHOES

Lookatmycrazyshoes.com are giving away one pair of Crocs shoes, worth £29. These clogs are colourful, soft and lightweight, and are designed to mould to each individual foot shape. Their shock-absorbing properties minimise the impact on the feet, legs, hips and lower back. They have slip-resistant soles and the orthotic foot bed massages and stimulates circulation.

The shoes have arch supports to help prevent rotation of the foot and other heel pad injuries. They also have ventilation and are bacteria and odour-resistant, making them ideal and practical for summer. Size and colour to be specified with the winner.

For your chance to win a pair of Crocs shoes, tick 'Crocs' on the entry form.

For more information, see www.lookatmycrazyshoes.com



Are you fed up of being treated as a second-class person because of your disability?

No Disabled bays!

Non-disabled badge holders parked in your bays!

Still finding it hard to access shop, services or public places!

Entrances and exits, no automatic doors, ramps, lifts or any other reason why you find it hard to access these places!

No disabled toilets, hard to use counters or service areas!

No auxiliary aids, induction loops etc.

Or refused entry with a guide dog!

Been treated less favourably than non-disabled people!

You can do something about it!

No matter how small you think the issue is, with EASTHAM'S acting on your behalf we can make these service providers make changes so disabled people don't have problems in their day to day life.

We can get you compensated without you paying a penny!

Call or write to find out more information: EASTHAM'S, P.O. Box 196, Accrington, Lancs, BB5 9AB. Tel: 0845 6017657

This is the place to complain about non-disabled people parking in disabled bays!

We can do something about it!

DN

disabilitynow

£1.80 May 2006

New and exclusive
Spring time offers!



Different by Design



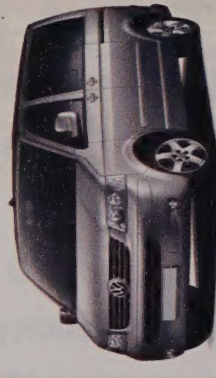
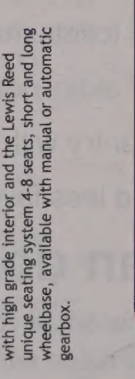
VW T5 Cruiser MkII

Based on the stylish and spacious VW T5 window van. 4-8 seats (including wheelchair user) and available in manual or automatic, short and long wheelbase with three different roof heights



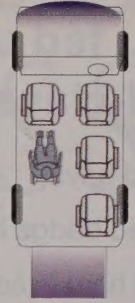
VW Shuttle SE

Affordable luxury the all new Shuttle SE comes with high grade interior and the Lewis Reed unique seating system 4-8 seats, short and long wheelbase, available with manual or automatic gearbox.



VW Caravelle Executive

Top of the range luxury with the award winning Caravelle range. Up to six seats, manual or automatic with several different engine sizes, as well as rear or side wheelchair access.



SPECIAL PRICE

Citroen Dispatch

Now only £13,195 OTR*
£800 reduction!



SPECIAL PRICE

Renault Kangoo Expression ‡

1.5D manual expression
Only £14295 OTR*
1.6 Auto expression
Only £14495 OTR*



SPECIAL PRICE

Citroen Berlingo

• Metallic Paint
Now from only £12795 OTR*
£1000 reduction!



All new and exclusive to Lewis Reed VW's - Lowering suspension

For increased comfort and ease of use, the all new lowering suspension system from Lewis Reed removes the need for a winch inside the vehicle by decreasing the slope of the access ramp. The improved entry and exit to the vehicle is quicker and easier for both wheelchair user and carer.

The VW range starts from just £16,450 converted, the all new lowering suspension system, just **£495†**

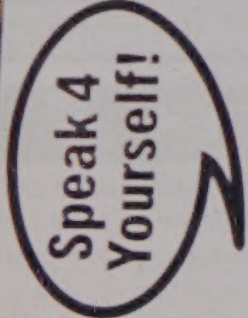


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